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*Music, the greatest good that mortals know.
And all of heaven we have below.*

Joseph Addison (1672 – 1719)
from *A Song for St Cecilia's Day*

**An exploration into the uptake rates of GCSE music with a
focus on the purposes of music in school.**

**By
Fiona Little**

Supervisor: Professor Mike Fleming

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education

School of Education

Durham University

2009

DECLARATION

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Abstract

An exploration into the uptake rates of GCSE music with a focus on the purposes of music in school.

Fiona Little

This thesis examines the relatively lower uptake rates of GCSE music in comparison to other optional subjects at Key Stage 4 (KS4), such as art, drama and sport. The purpose of the study is primarily to explore the factors which might influence students' decision whether or not to take GCSE music. In relation to this, the thesis also examines the purposes of music in schools; whether the compulsory music curriculum in school is mainly for: an aesthetic appreciation of music and the arts; the advancement of musical subject knowledge and preparation for further study at KS4; and/or for the attainment of extra-musical benefits, such as transfer effects. The extent to which lower uptake rates should be considered problematic is discussed, as well as the impact of uptake rates on the place of music in the school curriculum.

The key research question, "What are the factors which affect the uptake rates for GCSE Music?" is explored using a mixed methods design using quantitative and qualitative data. Data were collected from pupils in Key Stage 3 (N=679); those studying GCSE and A-Level Music (previous option-takers, N=275); students studying for the BMus in Music, and the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in secondary music (N=52).

The key findings indicate that children at KS3 reflect upon whether or not they perceive that music will be necessary for them in terms of future career choices as a major contributory factor as to whether they might opt to take GCSE music; they are less likely to choose the subject if they perceive that they will not undertake a career in music, and this factor was statistically significant above and beyond the other factors, between and within schools.

Additionally, children in KS3, although most felt that GCSE music would not be beyond them, felt that the perceived need and effort involved

in learning to play an instrument might deter them from opting to take GCSE music. The profile of the participants in the GCSE and A-Level music group (who had previously opted for GCSE music) showed that instrumental skills were held by all but two of these students, and indicate that instrumental skills are a part of most students' background; the implications of this are considered. Other factors are also considered. The implications of these findings are explored in the thesis and recommendations are given for further research.

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Introduction

Overview of the study

The research problem identified

Music means something to everyone on some level. It is a part of life that has the potential to bring joy and comfort, to soothe and uplift, and to transcend time and place. Access to music in some form, whether through listening, performing or composing, does not have to be dependent on financial status, social position or cultural background: everyone can appreciate and take part in music. Given the inclusive nature of music, and the widely-held belief that we are all able to partake in this art form on some level, (Blacking, 1973; Hallam, 2006) it seems not unreasonable to expect that music should be a part of the school curriculum for all children for whom education is compulsory in order that they receive the opportunity to experience music in at least one part of their lives.

Thankfully, with the advent of the National Curriculum for Music in 1992, the somewhat haphazard nature of the provision of music education within Britain before this time became less so; all schools were expected to provide a regular and good quality music education for their pupils (Swanwick, 1992). Nevertheless, as might be expected, the quality of such education has shown to vary considerably between schools over the subsequent years (QCA, 2003). Some schools provide inspiring classroom teaching which enhances a child's enjoyment and appreciation of music and introduces them to musical styles and genres which may not have been otherwise explored. Others excel in the programme of their extra-curricular musical activities and provide wonderful opportunities for their students which will be remembered fondly for the rest of their lives. Some schools provide both whilst some, unfortunately, struggle to provide either.

What is striking, however, is that music as a subject, despite its accessibility to all children both in school and out of school, and the high level of enjoyment that adolescents are purported to attach to music

generally, (North *et al.*, 2000; Hodges and Hack, 1996) has been consistently attracting lower numbers for GCSE than any other arts subjects, notably art and drama, all of which are optional at KS4. As Harland *et al.* state:

Amongst all the art forms, art (also) had the highest proportion of pupils taking it for GCSE...perhaps the most vulnerable aspect of music was the low numbers of pupils opting for it at GCSE...overall, music was the most problematic and vulnerable artform (Harland *et al.*, 2000: 296, 568).

The most recent statistics support these findings: the Joint Council for Qualifications (2006) cite the statistics for the 2004/2005 academic year in terms of the percentage of students who sat the GCSE exam: 3.7% took art; 1.8% took drama and 1.1% took music (JCQ, 2006). It must be noted that the percentages here represent the total numbers of UK candidates across all subjects, and so initially appear small. When broken down into actual numbers, however, the figures tell a more interesting story: 212,357 students took art; 100,808 took drama and 60,668 took music - just a 0.7 % difference between drama and music may not seem much, but it still equates to a difference of approximately 40,000 students across the country. Equally, the DfES (now the DCSF) statistics for the end of the 2005/2006 examination period show a greater proportion of students taking art (194,100 students) compared with 94,500 students taking drama and 54,900 taking music (DfES, 2007). Although these statistics do not include any students who opted to take the GCSE but dropped out before sitting the exam, they do show a markedly higher participation rate in both art and drama GCSE courses than music, and in this way help to highlight the problem. The following statement from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority also supports the need to explore this issue:

Further investigations are needed to explain why pupils, who really enjoy music and commit substantial amounts of their own time to music-making, do not wish to continue study of music in key stage 4 through the music GCSEs (QCA, 2004).

What must also be noted, however, is that there are wide variations of GCSE music uptake rates between schools, and it is seemingly difficult to

pinpoint the reasons why some schools recruit more students to take GCSE music than others. Building upon related literature, this thesis aims to explore the factors which may be influential in students' decision whether or not to take GCSE music, and why. The research will primarily explore the thoughts of KS3 students to assess this, and will attempt to differentiate between the influence of class music and extra-curricular music in and out of school. The views of GCSE music students, as well as those in further and higher music education, will also be explored in order to add insight to the KS3 findings. Issues related to class music teaching, positive or otherwise, will be identified in relation to uptake rates.

The potential implications and significance of relatively lower numbers opting to take GCSE music is also an important aspect of the study; the possibility that school music may be deemed defective and thus might be removed from the school curriculum has been suggested as a possible negative side effect of lower numbers taking GCSE music (Bray, 2000; Paynter, 2002) and must be acknowledged and further considered. On the other hand, lower uptake rates do not necessarily mean that students are not enjoying and benefiting from school music at KS3; it should not be assumed without question that the existence of low uptake rates is necessarily indicative of a problem. Indeed, a study undertaken by Lamont *et al.* (2003) found that low GCSE music uptake rates did not always equate to a lack of enjoyment of music lessons at KS3. This study, therefore, aims to contribute to the understanding of this issue by exploring whether lower uptake rates in music are indicative of a problem: this is a complex question which raises a number of related issues.

If, however, low music GCSE uptake rates can be considered problematic, and as a result of this the compulsory music curriculum is under threat, there is a need then to assess the justification for a compulsory music curriculum. Issues of justification raise a number of questions: is school music pre-KS4 mainly to: prepare students for the route to formal music qualifications; to develop an aesthetic appreciation of music; to enable

extra-musical benefits, or to provide a combination of all three? If school music can provide all three, the case for compulsory music is compelling.

Hallam (2006) writes of the many benefits of participating in music, and outlines numerous studies which have helped illustrate the variety of ways in which music can help children to develop, musically and socially:

Given the importance and range of these benefits, it is important that as many children as possible are provided with the opportunity to engage with music making at an early age (Hallam, 2006: 183-4).

From Hallam's research, it can be understood that musical learning is not just about formal qualifications, but can also offer a complex array of benefits for all: learning music in school as a compulsory part of the curriculum is a way of ensuring that all children have access to such benefits. These and related issues will be borne in mind throughout the study.

Outline of the research

Aims and Objectives of the Research

1. To explore and contribute towards a greater understanding of the potential factors which influence pupils' decisions to continue with or cease studying music when making the transition from KS3 to KS4.

2. To examine the extent of the possible impact of uptake rates on the compulsory music curriculum; this will include a discussion on the justifications and purposes of music in the school curriculum.

The research questions

The key research question is:

- What are the key factors which affect the uptake rate for GCSE music?

The following sub questions will also be explored:

- What is the correlation between participation in instrumental tuition and extra-curricular music in school and opting to take GCSE music?
- How much does musical activity outside school motivate students to continue with formal music education in school post-KS3?
- Do the students' perceptions (correct or incorrect) of what GCSE music entails have much of a bearing on their decision to opt for the subject in Year 9?
- How significant an issue is it that some schools recruit lower numbers than others, and what are the implications of this?

These questions will be examined in the context of a theoretical discussion related to issues of justification, aims and purpose both of music in general and specifically of music education and the music curriculum.

An overview of the thesis

Chapter 1 will form the review of the literature, and will be structured in three parts, following a brief overview. The first part will focus on the justifications for a school music curriculum, linked to the issue of GCSE uptake rates and will be subdivided into two sections; the first will look at extra-musical benefits, and the second at the aesthetic and musical benefits. The second part will explore the factors influencing option choices, and this part of the review will contribute heavily to the empirical work of this research. This will be followed by the third and final part which will discuss the pedagogical implications of relatively lower uptake rates, and the significance of the research problem to the field.

Chapter 2 will provide the details on the methodology used in the research. It will include details on: the research process; the theoretical basis of the research; the research design and data analysis.

Chapter 3 will comprise the data analysis, and will include the data for all questionnaires, including the quantitative and qualitative analysis and

processes. A summary of the data will end the chapter highlighting the main findings to be discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 will be the discussion, in which the findings from the data will be examined in relation to the literature on the topic.

Chapter 5 will conclude the thesis, beginning with a reminder of the aims of the research. The limitations will then be stated, followed by the implications from the findings and the recommendations based on these. Areas for further research will then be suggested.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Overview of the Literature Review

As discussed in the introduction, the literature review will be structured in three parts. The first part will explore the justifications for a school music curriculum in terms of extra-musical benefits, such as cognitive and social development, followed by the importance of the acquisition of musical skills, and the place of an aesthetic music education: it is understood that these factors are not mutually exclusive but form part of the whole experience of the education of the child. The issue of whether music education should be for all or for a select few will also be considered as part of the discussion.

Following this, the second part will consider the question of what motivates students to opt to take GCSE music and will include factors such as: students' enjoyment of music lessons; adolescents' musical identities out of school and how these relate to their perceptions of the relevance of music in school; and students' perceptions of what music GCSE involves. Much of this part of the literature review has had a direct impact on the empirical work of this study. Government initiatives which have attempted to investigate student perceptions of school music and how they relate to GCSE rates will also be discussed.

Finally, in part three there will be an assessment of the potential impact of a continued drop in numbers opting to take GCSE music, and a summary of the extent to which it can be considered problematic.

Literature Review Part 1

The Justifications for a School Music Education

The purpose of music in schools: some initial reflections

Over the years, great attention has been paid to the purpose of music in the school curriculum, and what the rationale for the inclusion of music as a subject is (Pitts, 2000; Westbury, 2002b; Paynter, 2002). Quite often, the debate is centred around a negative core of opinion which involves music being cited as a weak subject in the curriculum, almost doomed to fail, neither interesting to children in terms of the lesson content nor inspiring them to continue their musical studies post-KS3, (Ross, 1995; Harland *et al.*, 2000). With regards to the link between GCSE uptake rates and the status of music in schools, Ross (1995) states that 'its continuance beyond KS3 is bound to depend increasingly on its actual popularity with the children' (p.189). Additionally, the research of Bray (2000) has suggested that there is a danger that music could lose its place as a compulsory subject in the curriculum at KS3 if improvements in recruitment are not in evidence.

Such opinions might encourage teaching practitioners and researchers to reflect with candour on why music should have a place in the school curriculum, including whether or not lessons at KS3 should exist primarily to prepare possible candidates for further study at KS4, or should fulfil a means of educating all children in an aesthetic appreciation of music, regardless of whether or not they choose to carry on post-KS3. Some researchers advocate extra-musical benefits, such as improvements in general cognitive and social development, believed to result from musical training, as a legitimate justification to provide a music curriculum for all (Spychiger *et al.*, 1995; Rauscher *et al.*, 1997). If all these outcomes are desirable, considerations should be given to how teachers can achieve them and, if necessary, what can be done to improve music in schools.

There is certainly a need to be realistic about the standards of music education, but this must be done with a sense of optimism and an

appreciation of what is deemed good practice; in this way, an informed and objective debate can ensue regarding the purposes of a music education which is focussed less on negativity and more on helpful suggestion (Gammon, 1996).

Mills (2005b) supports this view and delivers a cautionary note to the reader not to dwell too much on the critical nature of some researchers, but to be objective and recognise that 'music is simply not in the terminal condition that some commentators believe it to be' (Mills, 2005b: 198). In this way we might be afforded the hope that, even if music has been regarded as one of the least successfully taught subjects at KS3 in the past, it is nonetheless improving across the board, enabling a focus on the development of effective teaching and learning and an evolving assessment of what music education is trying to achieve. The following sections will consider the justifications for music in school, starting with the study of extra-musical benefits.

The extra-musical benefits of musical participation and education

Introduction

The majority of individuals old enough to choose their own leisure activities (who do not have a professional association with music or a higher level of knowledge of music psychology) may know that they enjoy listening to, performing or composing music, which is why they do it, but are not necessarily aware of why that is, or of the value they attach to music beyond their initial appreciation. In the case of very young children or those without the ability to communicate freely, it is perhaps even harder to assess the level to which the individual appreciates music, and how much the experience of musical participation, active or passive, enriches their lives. Yet music has an impact upon a wide variety of types of people. As Anthony Storr writes:

Music can enable brain-damaged people to accomplish tasks which they could not master without it. It can also make life liveable for people who are emotionally disturbed or

mentally ill. Because music is not so obviously necessary to most of us, we tend to underestimate its significance in the lives of normal people (Storr, 1992: 107).

Storr's writing suggests that musical participation, at whatever age, can provide benefits of which individuals are not necessarily aware. Other researchers in the field have also explored such benefits, including antenatal reactions of the foetus to music, and how this may relate to later development (Fifer and Moon, 1989; Lecanuer, 1996; Jordan-Decarbo and Nelson, 2002; Hallam, 2006). In terms of this study, it is important to outline in what ways the focus on neuroscience and the developmental and social psychology of music is related to music education.

In generic terms, the study of neuroscience and education has attracted a growing interest:

Over the past five years, there has been increasing interest in bringing together the two disciplines of neuroscience and education which have hitherto had little dialogue. What do they have to offer? Will brain research...be able to inform the naturalistic setting of the classroom? (Price, 2007a: 139).

The field of neuroscience can help educators to discern the benefits of studying music for a variety of purposes. Frances Rauscher, in response to Katie Overy's (1998) research paper "Can Music Really 'Improve' the Mind?", succinctly explains why this is so:

Music education is in danger of being forced into oblivion and research information that is relevant to curriculum policy decisions must be disseminated. Although many music educators are outraged (and rightly so) that the justification for music may lie in research revealing its extra-musical benefits, *I suggest that to exclude these studies from discussions arguing for music in schools is to do a disservice to the children whose lives will be affected when music programmes are eliminated or otherwise disturbed* (Rauscher, 1998: 198) (my italics).

From this quotation, the general relevance of discussing the 'extra-musical' benefits of musical study to which Rauscher refers is clear and also applies to this study: if the result of fewer GCSE candidates in music is that a compulsory school music education for all is put in jeopardy, then a good starting place for discussion is to explore in what ways music is advantageous, not just in a classroom setting. Hallam (2006) further describes the dilemma facing music educators:

Music has benefits throughout our lives, literally from birth to death...It pervades our everyday lives and influences our behaviour. The downside of the easy availability of music in the developed world is that there is a tendency to take it for granted. Educators frequently are called upon to justify the place of music in the curriculum and often have to battle for sufficient time allocation for appropriate engagement with music to take place (Hallam, 2006: 193).

If indeed musical participation provides developmental and social benefits which are not immediately obvious, then it is the duty of the music education researcher to highlight these. Furthermore, if compulsory school music is under threat for whatever reason, then *all* benefits of the subject should be made known. Rather than regarding the necessity to study the extra-musical benefits of music education as an irrelevance, perhaps it should be seen as a means of strengthening the argument that music is not just desirable in schools, but is needed in schools. Hargreaves writes on the importance of acknowledging musical development, based upon psychological research findings, as interrelated with music education:

I am not alone in having been concerned for some time about the need for bridge-building between research on musical development and classroom practice in music education (Hargreaves, 1996: 145).

The general role of music in the school curriculum will be explored more fully later in the review, but for now the discussion will concentrate more specifically on the reported benefits of musical participation from a psychological and neuroscientific perspective, bearing in mind how these might be useful to classroom practice.

Musical participation and cognitive ability

In his report into brain, behaviour, biology and music, neuroscientist Weinberger stated that:

Music has benefits to intellectual development that transcend music itself...the learning and performing of music is very likely to be of direct neurobiological benefit (Weinberger, 1998: 32).

The debate into how much music can improve cognitive ability and the extent of the neurobiological benefit of music to which Weinberger refers, is long-running; in 1922, MacPherson stated that:

It is an acknowledged fact that, when properly carried out, class work in music...has most certainly the effect of stimulating the mental faculties of those who take part in it, and, as a result, of improving the standard of work in other departments (MacPherson, 1922: 13).

Although it is difficult to ascertain what constitutes 'properly carried out' class work from this statement alone, MacPherson's point is nonetheless indicative of a long-held interest in not only the direct cognitive benefits of musical study, but also of the transferable skills to other subjects. The 'Mozart effect', whereby listening to Mozart is said to improve short-term spatial temporal reasoning ability, has been explored in a more recent study by Rauscher *et al.* (1995), and provides an empirical investigation into the transferability of the effects of musical exposure, in particular the music of Mozart, to other areas of higher brain function. The authors justify the decision to use the music of Mozart due to the belief that, as he began composing at the age of 4, Mozart was 'exploiting the inherent repertoire of spatial-temporal firing patterns in the cortex' (Rauscher *et al.*, 1995: 46), a process necessary for successful completion of the tasks given to the participants in their study. The three groups were split into groups of similar intellectual ability: one group ('Silence') received no music; another listened to 10 minutes of Mozart each day of the experiment ('Mozart'), and the final ('Mixed') group listened to 10 minutes of different music each day across the 5 days of the experiment. Interestingly, the results showed that, whilst the Mozart group performed best on the tasks, the Silence group, which listened to no music, outperformed the Mixed group; this finding suggests that it is more the *type* of music that is listened to that has the effect, and that it should not be assumed that all music is beneficial to spatial reasoning or any other area of cognitive ability. Lamont (1998) also urges caution where researchers might be tempted to generalise:

Whilst the evidence has been generally positive, it seems that the *particular* music or musical styles used in such studies can be critical in determining outcomes... (previous research) found certain kinds of background music actually had negative effects on cognitive performance (Lamont, 1998: 201).

Lamont goes on to mention that the studies she cites do not indicate any lasting effects, and Rauscher's (1995) study reports the same findings. It is curious that Rauscher's study did not expose the participants to more than 10 minutes' of music a day, and this methodological choice is not justified. It is also unclear as to the rationale for the sample selection; if indeed, as the researchers believe, Mozart showed evidence of firing patterns in the cortex at age 4 through his composing skills, and this was in fact the justification for choosing his music, then why did the researchers select undergraduates as participants for this study, rather than young children? Methodological difficulties associated with the assessment of the spatial-temporal reasoning abilities of young children may be the reason, but this is not made clear here.

Two years later, however, a new study by a larger group of researchers including Rauscher, attempted to explore the long-term enhancement of young children's spatial-temporal reasoning, based on the research of Leng and Shaw (1991), which suggested that the plastic cortices of young children are highly susceptible to music training. The experiment took place over a two year period, enabling an exploration of the effects over a longer term. The results yielded an improvement in spatial temporal task performance for children who had received music training greater than those who had not, and the effects were reported to last at least a day. The authors maintain that the results may be of great interest to scientists and educators and, from a theoretical perspective, they provide scope for investigation. At the same time, methodological limitations associated with this and related studies must be acknowledged:

Studies with preschool children establishing a connection between spatial ability and keyboard training are promising but not conclusive... the use of a variety of measures of spatial reasoning is a methodological issue impacting the findings of these studies that investigate the connection between music and spatial reasoning abilities (Jordan-Decarbo and Nelson, 2002: 219).

Furthermore, from a practical perspective, how realistic is it to continue music training with only the music of Mozart and Beethoven as repertoire (as in the Rauscher *et al.* 1997 study)? In order for such findings to be truly useful to practitioners, more guidance is needed as to *how much* of a particular sort of music is needed to achieve the desired effect, and how to cater for the developing musical needs and tastes of the individual students as they grow older and move into formal schooling: after all, it would be concerning if the main motivation for learning an instrument was based purely on the achievement of cognitive transfer effects, rather than for reasons such as an enjoyment and interest in music for its own sake (Plummeridge, 2001).

Schellenberg (2004) also discusses the ambiguities associated with researching the Mozart effect, stating that various researchers had found the findings 'difficult to replicate' (p. 511). In Schellenberg's own research, exploring the effects of instrumental music lessons on general intelligence, a large group of children were allocated to four different groups: two of the groups received music training (one group had keyboard lessons, one had singing lessons); and two were control groups in which one received lessons in drama, a non-musical artistic subject, and the other received no lessons. It was found that the music groups did demonstrate a statistically significant improvement in tests of IQ where the control groups did not. Schellenberg is careful to point out that as researchers we must be wary of accepting that music lessons are a causal explanation of children who have a higher IQ than their peers who are not undertaking musical training. That is, confounding factors such as 'prior IQ, socioeconomic status, and education' (ibid.: 511) must first be eliminated to judge the true transfer effects of music lessons. The research of Harland *et al.* (2000) also looked in part at the effect of studying the arts on overall academic achievement, in particular at GCSE level, and acknowledged the impact of confounding variables:

From the case study schools...staff and pupils identified some transfer effects, especially in art and drama but less so in music...these perceived effects probably lacked the quantity

and quality to produce a visible effect in GCSE statistics, once background variables like prior attainment and social class had been taken into account. These findings add further weight to the emerging literature which strikes a cautionary note on the purported 'Mozart effect' (Harland *et al.*, 2000: 295).

Returning to Schellenberg's research, the author highlights the need to confront confounding variables as well as comparing non-musical subjects that also have extra-curricular activities, such as drama and sport, with music. In this way, it can be more reliably assessed whether or not it is music specifically that has a positive effect on general intelligence: if claims are to be made that music, more than any other subject, does indeed have such far-reaching benefits, then research must be methodologically sound and thorough in its approach. What is notable about Schellenberg's research, however, is that although it is stated in the introduction that prior education and socioeconomic status are important potential confounding factors, there is no reference in the methodology section as to how this is addressed in the author's own research. It is mentioned that the participants' parents were interviewed before the experiment, but the purpose of the interviews was apparently in order to ascertain parental compliance with the research, and whether or not there was a suitable keyboard on which to practise.

How can we know from this information alone that the results of Schellenberg's own research are not skewed by the possibility of prior musical training of some of the participants and/or socio-economic status? The author does not address what has already been discussed as important issues affecting the validity of this type of research.

This aside, Schellenberg's research found that music lessons did produce a small increase in IQ where drama lessons did not, and in this way the author concludes that, in terms of developing critical thinking and/or reasoning skills, both of which are useful in learning subjects across the school curriculum, 'extra-curricular experiences such as music lessons appear to play a role in this process' (p 514). So what does this mean for the school music curriculum, not just extra-curricular activities? Schellenberg's research comprised, across the four main groups, small groups of six

children per group, each child aged approximately 6 years, and thus it is difficult to know whether or not the detected transfer effects would have been the same in a larger class of up to 30 or so children at KS3. What is interesting, though, is one of the comments made by Schellenberg in the discussion:

How can one explain the association between music lessons and IQ? It is well established that simple attendance at school raises IQ, and that school instruction is particularly effective when classes are small. Music lessons, taught individually, or in small groups, may provide additional boosts in IQ because they are like school *but still enjoyable* (Schellenberg, 2004: 513) (my italics).

The section of writing in italics, particularly the use of the word 'but', suggests at first sight that music lessons, particularly when taught in small groups as in Schellenberg's experiment, are the most effective, maybe even most enjoyable, way of learning music, above and beyond school music, if transfer effects are to be in evidence.

Another seemingly important aspect involved in the development of children's musical competencies, related specifically to neuroscientific research, is *when* formal training begins. Flohr and Hodges (2002), in their chapter on 'Music and Neuroscience', highlight the difference between so-called 'optimal' and 'critical' periods of musical development. That is, an optimal period denotes one during which musical training will be 'faster or easier', (p. 998) and a critical period is one in which musical development would be severely compromised if such a 'window of opportunity' is missed. Although the authors state that there have been no proven cases of critical periods in music development research, they argue that that there are '*possible critical periods in music*' (p.998) (my italics). The authors use a case study involving adults with or without a history of violin training to illustrate this: following a brain scan, differences between those adults who had received violin training and those who had not were apparent:

The area of the somatosensory cortex representing the fingers of the left fingering hand was larger than that in the contralateral hemisphere representing the right bow hand and also larger than that in the corresponding area in nonmusicians (Flohr and Hodges, 2002: 998).

Additionally, it was observed that the effect was larger for those who had started musical training before the age of 10. Research was also cited (Schlaug *et al.*, 1995) which suggested that those who began musical training before the age of 7 'exhibited increased corpus callosum size' (Flohr and Hodges, 2002: 998); and Gordon (1979, 1990) found that children's musical aptitude scores do not alter significantly after the age of about 9 years. So what does all this mean for music education? Hargreaves and Marshall (2007) write that 'research suggests that babies and young children display musical perception skills regardless of whether or not they receive any formal musical training' (p.32), yet there are certainly indications from the discussions so far that formal training can have a positive impact on musical development, and the earlier it starts, the better. Gardner's work on the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983), of which music is considered one, discusses the impact of formal training on children's musical development:

Even the slightest musical stimulation becomes a crystallizing experience. Moreover, once exposed to formal training, these same children appear to pick up requisite skills with great rapidity – as Vygotsky would put it, they exhibit a large zone of potential (or proximal) development (Gardner, 1983: 113).

Music education, if it can be considered formal training, and for now it is to be regarded as such, therefore has the potential to enable *all* children to explore their musical capabilities to the full, and create the 'windows of opportunity' to which researchers refer. If indeed musical training is preferable, even essential, at as early an age as possible to maximise cognitive benefits and transfer effects, this has particular implications for music in the primary school, for both teachers and pupils (Jørgensen, 2001).

The aforementioned term 'window of opportunity' calls for greater definition, as Flohr and Hodges (2002) acknowledge. They also warn of the need to be careful when making claims and generalisations about neuroscientific research findings:

The fact that writers often do not specify the window of opportunity as critical or optimal leads to much confusion. For example, it is an overstatement of neuroscientific research to say there is a window of opportunity during the ages of 3-7 years and if a parent does not

give the child a chance during those ages, the child will not be musical (Flohr and Hodges, 2002: 998-99).

The authors go on to highlight research that has discovered the brain to be highly adaptable, and not fully formed even at adolescence, and thus claims of critical stages of development in music must be made with caution. To oversimplify such research is possibly to lessen its credibility and do an injustice to the potential it can offer all educationalists, as the more recent research of Price (2007a) testifies:

Unrealistic claims were made initially about the impact of neuroscientific research upon education. The inevitable backlash has suggested that 'neuro-myths' (Bruer, 1997) have emerged (Price, 2007a: 139).

There is a need, then, to approach the use of neuroscientific research within education with optimism and caution, and to ensure that when it is used in conjunction with educational theory, it is done so with careful thought for the context in which it is being applied, and an awareness of the extent of its usefulness in practice. With this approach in mind, educationalists may see the relevance in adopting a recent suggestion that 'classroom practices, curricula and pedagogy should change in response to the unfolding knowledge of how the brain works' (ibid.: 139).

Nevertheless, there is certainly the need to acknowledge that musical training does seem to have some benefits for cognitive ability that can transfer to other areas of higher brain function and, in educational terms, might be useful to subject areas other than music. As long as the research is not taken out of context or applied too liberally to educational theory or practice, it can form part of the overall picture of what music as a subject in the school curriculum might offer to all children.

Music and social development

The non-musical benefits of music education and participation are not just associated with cognitive ability. Hargreaves (1986) writes that:

Most theorists agree that music teaching should cover much more than just the learning of specific musical skills...music education ought to contribute to intellectual, emotional,

sensory-motor and social development, and no doubt further dimensions could be added to this list (Hargreaves 1986: 216).

It is to the social and emotional development of musical participation that this discussion now turns.

A study exploring the non-musical transfer effects of music education, and in particular the effect on social interaction, is that of Spychiger *et al.* (1993). The researchers wanted to explore the possibility that more music teaching might lead to a better 'social climate', and conducted a study in the classrooms of fifty primary schools in Switzerland. The researchers stressed that the methodological difference between their study and that of similar research gone before was the use of control classes. As they point out when discussing the results:

It turned out that it is important to use control groups where the students have little music education since the results show that there is some improvement in these classes, too, which cannot be attributed to music education (Spychiger *et al.*, 1995: 335).

For those students who received just over twice as much weekly music tuition as their peers for three years, it was hoped that there would be an improvement not only in their 'social competence, but also in concentration, creativity, motivation for school, achievement, and even physical development' (ibid.: 323). The authors were clear that they were not intending to test a theory, as there was little reliable research to test, rather that they were attempting to formulate a theory based on the 'long-term effects of music and music teaching on the social domain,' (p.324) which is one of several domains the authors consider to be independent :

Personality Domain	Short Term Effects (Music Psychology)	Long Term Effects (Music Education)
cognitive	1	6
social	2	7
emotional	3	8
aesthetical	4	9
physiological	5	10

Figure 1: Classification of the questions concerning the effect of music and music teaching (Spychiger *et al.*, 1995: 324).

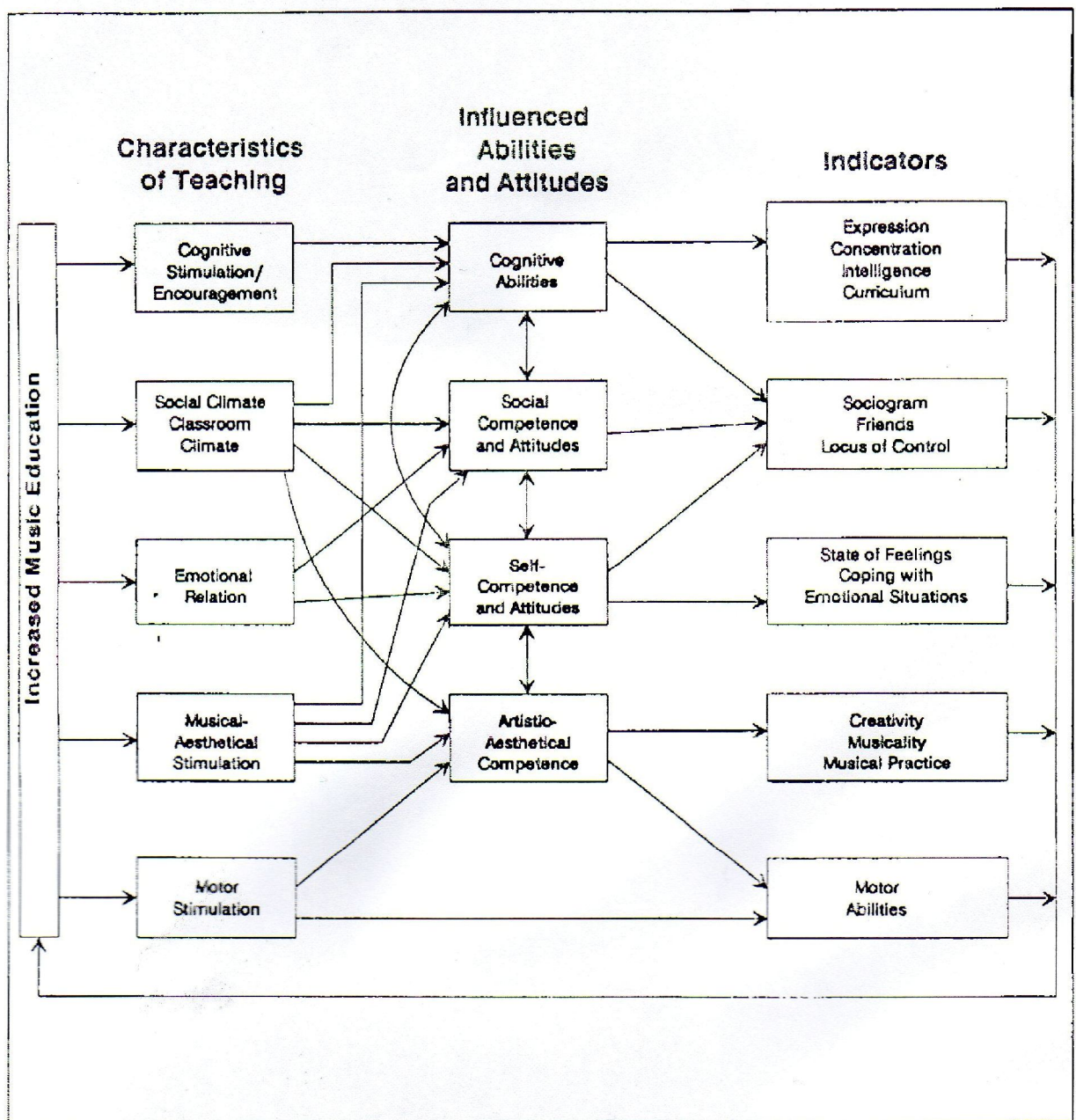


Figure 2: Hypothesized pattern of relationships between increased music teaching and positive development of personality (Spychiger *et al.*, 1995: 325).

Figure 2 provides a useful starting point for understanding the links between music psychology and music education, although it does raise questions about the organisation of the components (for example, should the indicator 'expression' be part of either 'self-competence and attitudes' or 'artistic-aesthetical competence', rather than 'cognitive abilities'?).

The results showed that the classes which were exposed to 5 weekly music lessons instead of two over the three years did demonstrate signs of increased 'positive social interconnectedness'; (ibid.: 330) that is, students

behaved more positively towards other students and there was thus the sense of a better social climate after increased music lessons.

In order that some of the children could receive the extra music lessons, they attended fewer language and mathematics classes to enable all music tuition to be taught in curriculum time. Interestingly, the results showed that the students receiving more music, and thus less mathematics and languages tuition, actually improved in reading and languages and were no worse at mathematics than those in the control groups. There is an interesting point for debate here: if more music teaching, at the expense of other subjects, does not have a negative impact on the standard achieved in those subjects, yet improves the social climate within classes, then there may be a case for music as a subject fulfilling far more than simply the teaching of the subject itself. The researchers do point out in the conclusions of the paper, however, that 'the effects of music education are much more complex than commonly assumed', (ibid.: 335) and do not profess to have proved anything by this research, or that it can be applied more generally. Moreover, they undertook an exploratory piece of research which provides scope for further investigation and can certainly encourage all those involved in music education, and indeed education in general, to look beyond the initial teaching and learning experience that occurs in the music classroom, to the more far-reaching, non-musical effects.

An interesting finding of Schellenberg's (2004) aforementioned research on music lessons and IQ was that those children who were involved in drama lessons demonstrated 'improvements in adaptive social behaviour that were not evident in the music groups' (p. 511). There is no suggested reason for the comparative lack of improvement in social behaviour in the music groups, nor is there a suggestion that this should be explored as an area of further research. Nevertheless, it is a useful reminder that music lessons do not necessarily guarantee a greater social cohesion amongst classes; what is interesting to consider is that there is a possibility that the conditions within the classroom setting such as relationships with the

teacher and number of pupils, and perhaps also outside the school environment, are important factors determining the extent to which social development might occur. The role of the institution on musical motivation will be discussed in more depth later in the review, as will the effect of participation in extra-curricular musical activities in and out of school on GCSE uptake rates.

This section has aimed to introduce some research which has highlighted the extra-musical benefits of musical participation and to present the idea that music education can be regarded as fulfilling more than the teaching of the subject itself and as having far-reaching benefits. The next section will study the aesthetic and musical benefits of a music education, including an in-depth exploration of the purpose of a compulsory school music education for all.

The aesthetic and musical benefits of a school music education

Introduction

Although musical participation, either in or out of the classroom, may offer extra-musical benefits, such benefits should not necessarily comprise the single justification for a music curriculum, and any debate about the purpose of music in schools should be debated by exploring *all* benefits available to students. As Plummeridge (2001) writes:

It is one thing to say that the study of music has transfer effects, but quite another to claim that this makes music unique which in turn provides its justification as a curriculum subject...Attempting to judge music education in terms of students' achievement in other areas of the curriculum would be quite ludicrous, but this would be the logical outcome arising from a justification which relies on transfer theory...Any proper justification for music, or anything else, has to be with reference to broader educational principles (Plummeridge, 2001: 24).

Mills (1998b) appears to agree with Plummeridge and wrote of the need to question how much music can really improve the pupil's mind in a classroom context. At the same time, she made a thought-provoking comment on the purposes of a school music education:

Once we know more we will need to establish whether these factors (of music improving the mind) can be packaged in a music education that is excellent musically. If they cannot, then the investigation may have added to the sum of human knowledge, but will not be of educational value. Whatever the potential of music to improve the mind, the main purpose of teaching music in schools is excellence in music (Mills, 1998b: 205).

This is an interesting statement, as it is debatable what 'excellence in music' means. Although Mills refers to excellence in music as the 'main' purpose and not the only one, and we can thereby assume that she attaches additional value to music in schools, this is stated as the predominant purpose. What does 'excellence' mean? Perhaps this is suggesting an excellence in the standard achieved by students in terms of ability, or excellence in teaching whereby all students have the chance to access a musically excellent education, whatever that may be, no matter what standard they reach so long as they have fulfilled their potential.

Whatever the exact meaning behind Mills' statement, at this point in the discussion it provides a relevant area for reflection on the specific, more musical, purposes of a school music education beyond extra-musical benefits. There will first be reference to past research which has debated the intrinsic, aesthetic benefits of receiving a music education. This will pave the way for a study of related issues including a discussion of the specialist/generalist debate on whether music education should be available for all or only for those who show an interest in the subject: 'excellence in music' in relation to attainment will be explored as part of this discussion. These issues will be examined with broad reference to GCSE uptake rates in music.

Music Education as Aesthetic Education.

Koopman writes that:

Pupils should learn to perceive, think and judge critically about music, both in relation to the intrinsic value of music and in relation to the uses and abuses of music in society. For people who get the chance to develop their musical sensitivity, who have good opportunities to participate in authentic musical activities...a fulfilling musical life may not be as bleak as postmodern philosophy suggests (Koopman, 2005: 128).

This is where the argument for the case of music as aesthetic education might begin: music education, aside from its possible transfer effects and the opportunity to develop skilled musicians, might also develop in children a love of a subject and the opportunity for a quality experience which is rooted in an appreciation for the arts and an awareness of the impact of culture on musical experience. Uplifting as this might sound, it is important not to become too sentimental about the idea of music as aesthetic education, but to assess the concept critically and with the practicalities of how this relates to teaching in the classroom in mind. Leonhard (1985) was quoted in Westbury (2002b: 105) as stating:

I never anticipated that the concept of aesthetic education would come to be used as the major tenet in the justification of music education. That has, however, happened. As a result, the profession has been sated with vague esoteric statements of justification that no one understands, including, I suspect, most of the people who make those statements (Leonhard, 1985).

The fact that many people, according to Leonhard, do not necessarily understand the concept of music as aesthetic education is difficult, particularly when it might be used as a 'major tenet' in its justification, but that does not mean that the idea should be dismissed, either. For the purposes of this discussion, the meaning of aesthetic education, not just in music but across the arts and indeed in other subject areas, will be explored briefly now.

The nature of what it means to experience something aesthetically is historically difficult to define. Almost 40 years ago, Charlton (1970) wrote of a set of criteria upon which aesthetic appreciation and judgement might be assessed in order to increase understanding of what it means to experience something aesthetically. These criteria included an awareness of the form of the experience; emotion; an immersion within a particular frame of mind (one of detachment or disinterestedness); and a number of formal features of judgement that might distinguish between an aesthetic judgement and another, perhaps more concrete, type of judgement.

Yet helpful as this might be in trying to understand this rather complex phenomenon, Charlton later states that 'there is no single feature which makes a situation aesthetic, no single set of criteria by which we can recognise aesthetic judgements' (p. 11). From the introduction of his book, Charlton requests that the reader bear this in mind, so as not to become rigid in the sense of what aestheticism is and thus lose sight of the subjectivity which is at the core of aesthetic appreciation.

Certainly, there may be an unknown element to what it is to experience something aesthetically, as Charlton (1970) points out. Goldman (2001), however, supports the idea of using a criterion by which to understand the aesthetic experience further, and writes that it is necessary to explore the details of aesthetic appreciation so that we understand how and why we value art works. Thus an exploration into this subjective experience can help to understand whether certain attitudes and approaches towards experiences might enhance the nature and type of their appreciation.

Goldman cites the 18th century philosopher Alexander Baumgarten who first used the term 'aesthetic' and explained it as cognition of the senses. Later, Kant built upon this by explaining aesthetic appreciation as judgements of beauty in nature and art; Goldman writes that this concept has widened in recent years:

It now qualifies not only judgements or evaluations, but properties, attitudes, experience, and pleasure or value as well, and its application is no longer restricted to beauty alone (Goldman, 2001: 181).

This idea can be extended to the education of a child; although there is an immediate difficulty in identifying a definitive meaning of what it is to teach or experience an aesthetic education, nonetheless exploring and identifying the meaning and potential impact of aesthetic appreciation broadens the aims of the education of the child from those based solely on cognitive, skill-based objectives towards those which include less tangible, but possibly altogether more enriching elements, particularly in arts-based subjects.

The work of Charlton (1970) and Goldman (2001), therefore, helps to contribute to our understanding of the ways in which children might benefit from an aesthetic education, even if we may not completely understand the processes involved, either on an individual or whole-class level. In relation to music education, Plummeridge (1999) and Koopman (2005) maintain that a well-rounded music education involves the acquisition of both a cognitive understanding of the subject, and a more experiential level of learning, akin to the 'sensuous knowledge' to which Baumgarten referred in the 18th century (Goldman, 2001: 181). Further to this, other researchers argue that it is undesirable to try to separate the aesthetic, or affective, experience from the cognitive, particularly in practice (Hargreaves, 1986; Swanwick, 1999; Finney, 2002). That is, in theory it is relatively straightforward to discuss the development of musical skills and musical appreciation as separate entities, as has been done to a degree in this discussion so far. In practice, however, when faced with a classroom of children, it would be difficult, and equally undesirable, to regard the learning of musical skills as unrelated to an

appreciation of music as an art form; if aesthetic education is to have a place in the classroom and is to be used as a justification for music in the curriculum, then it is important that teachers have an understanding and awareness of the possibilities of an aesthetic education in order to encourage critical development of ideas to foster musical appreciation and value, but also that it occurs as a natural process alongside the development of musical skills such as composing and performing: an aesthetic education should form part of the overall musical education of the child. As Swanwick (1999) writes:

The main problem of special pleading for the arts based on the supposed unifying idea of the aesthetic is that it reactivates the underlying old and unhelpful division between the 'affective' and the 'cognitive', between feeling and thinking. This dichotomy is, of course, false... The important point... is that the 'aesthetic' is but one element of artistic activity (Swanwick, 1999: 6-7).

There is also the view that aesthetic education in music enables musical appreciation that goes beyond the classroom and should be regarded as a way of teaching for life, not just for the purposes of fulfilling a given syllabus at any one time in the school year. Small (1996) writes eloquently on the purpose of art in education, and quotes the writing of Herbert Read (1943) who states that it should be the case that if children are to experience a well-rounded and meaningful education in general, and in the arts in particular, then their education should be developed through 'an integrated mode of experience... in which perception and feeling move in organic rhythm, systole and diastole, towards and even fuller and freer apprehension of reality' (Read, 1943: 105). Small continues by exploring the idea of examinations in the arts which, he argues, largely ignore the development of aesthetic appreciation of a subject in favour of a specific knowledge base:

Examinations designed to separate the 'brighter' from the 'dimmer'... work along only one axis, which we might call the intellectual-verbal, and test only that arbitrarily chosen variety of excellence... all other kinds of excellence, of which there are as many as there are people, are ignored (Small, 1996: 219).

In terms of GCSE uptake rates and the focus of this thesis, it might be the case that if children are exposed to the experiential side of musical

learning, alongside the process of composing, listening and of course appraising throughout their compulsory years of music education, there might develop within them the desire to continue with music not purely for the gain of the qualification itself, but also for the opportunity to continue to grow in knowledge and appreciation of this art form beyond their own accumulated knowledge outside the classroom. There may of course not be a conscious awareness of this on the part of the children, but it is worth consideration on the part of educators. For this reason, the value that children attach to their music lessons, and how this relates to numbers intending to continue with music post-KS3, will form an important element of the study.

Aesthetic education in music, then, is hard to define, but seems to represent a different level of understanding and experience from the gathering of facts about music; it is more associated with the experience of knowing through feeling. As Plummeridge (1999) writes:

However much importance is attached to the instrumental purposes (of a music education), it always seems to be counterbalanced by the rather more optimistic view of education as a process in which children are taken to new worlds where they gain experiences that transform their lives and develop them as persons. And ultimately, it is the values embodied in this ideal that guide and inspire all teachers and give point and meaning to their professional endeavours (Plummeridge, 1999: 122).

If it is indeed desirable to view aesthetic education as one of the intrinsic justifications for a compulsory music curriculum, in addition to the extrinsic, extra-musical benefits discussed earlier in the review, then it might be assumed that such an education should be available for all children to experience. Nevertheless, there are some researchers who have suggested that a music education, rather than delivering cognitive and social benefits and musical appreciation which might be gained outside of school, should exist only for those who have a particular interest or ability in the subject, for whom 'musical excellence' is their desired aim. It is to this debate that the discussion now turns: should school music cater for all, or for some?

Music for all?

The most recent discussion has focussed on the perceived aesthetic benefits of a music education for all. Ultimately, however, there is an argument, which may lie uncomfortably with many, which is that pupils do not actually *need* music as part of their day-to-day education. As Bowman writes:

However unique the nature of music, however much we may value it, the troublesome facts remain that it is not essential to life and that many of the putative outcomes of musical study are not highly valued by society at large (Bowman, 2002: 63).

Some proponents of music education for all might retaliate with the argument that music *is* essential to life, albeit not required in order to survive. Furthermore, one only has to imagine a world without the experience of music to realise that life would be, for many, less enjoyable and missing a fundamental part of what makes us human. Bowman goes on to state:

One such strategic counter to such concerns is that, inessential though music may be to life, it is indispensable to a life well lived, or to a life worth living. It can, taught and learned well, impart rich meaning and purpose to people's lives (ibid.: 63).

The suggestion that music should not be available for all children in school but only for those who show a particular interest or, more controversially, aptitude for the subject, may fill some educationalists with trepidation; it certainly appears to go against the widely held view that all children should have access to a music education (Lamont *et al.*, 2003; Price, 2005). As Paynter (2002) writes:

Music has its own rigour in the demands of sensitivity, imagination, and inventiveness common to all artistic endeavour – qualities which are sorely needed in the modern world. This, I suggest, is what we should expect, first and foremost, from musical education in the classroom – an education accessible to all pupils (Paynter, 2002: 223).

Taken out of context, this is an advocacy statement justifying the position of music in the school curriculum as a creative challenge; different from, but in no way inferior to, other subjects, which should be available to all. However, Paynter asks at the beginning of the same paper whether 'we (should) not bother at all with music in schools, providing instead dedicated

facilities for those who want them in local music schools or conservatoires?' (p.217). It is important to respond to such a question pragmatically rather than emotively, as it is a suggestion to consider and for good reason. Paynter's argument is that if there is going to be a music education for all, then it must be of educational value. Obvious as this might seem, there is scope for thought here: why have music in the curriculum when music is so readily available and enjoyed outside of school? (North *et al.*, 2000; Hargreaves and Marshall, 2003). It cannot be assumed that simply because music is studied in school, that the formalised institutional setting automatically equates to educational value.

Sloboda (2001) also discusses the perceived problems with classroom music provision due to the 'strong cultural forces at work' (p. 250) in the present times. He hypothesised that:

...classroom music, as currently conceptualised and organised, is an inappropriate vehicle(s) for mass music education in 21st century Britain. Hints of the parameters of a more effective music education environment may well be found within the somewhat anarchic mixed economy of out-of-school provision in this country (ibid.: 252).

Sloboda's suggestion, like Paynter's (2002) aforementioned idea of providing music out of school, is an interesting one, and he goes on to urge a re-evaluation of not only the breadth of study, but also the relationship between pupil and teacher so that 'personal autonomy and cultural differentiation' can feature strongly in music provision. Sloboda recognises here that young people may have a variety of needs, and do not necessarily want their music education to be limited to the confines of the school institution. In terms of catering for those with both a mild interest and those who wish to explore music further, perhaps to GCSE and beyond, Sloboda suggests that 'entry and exit points' would allow a 'long term syllabi for some, but...a far wider variety of short-term projects for others' (p.252). This arrangement would also sit comfortably with the findings of Lamont *et al.*, (2003) who suggest that 'musical involvement is widespread but transitory' (p.239), and would allow students the option of taking part in music, with the aim of leading to the development of music as a subject with optimum

educational value. Sloboda's (2001) research also highlights the need to include musical activities which 'should mirror more closely the types (of music)...in the sub-cultures they value' (p.252). Organising this sort of music education outside of school could be logistically challenging, however, and there is still the question of how to include all children in such a scheme if desired.

It may be helpful to look now at Hargreaves' (1996) model of the specialist-generalist model of music teaching methods (Figure 3) which provides a useful overview of how 'music for all' (generalist) and the alternative music for the select few (specialist) might be organised from a theoretical perspective:

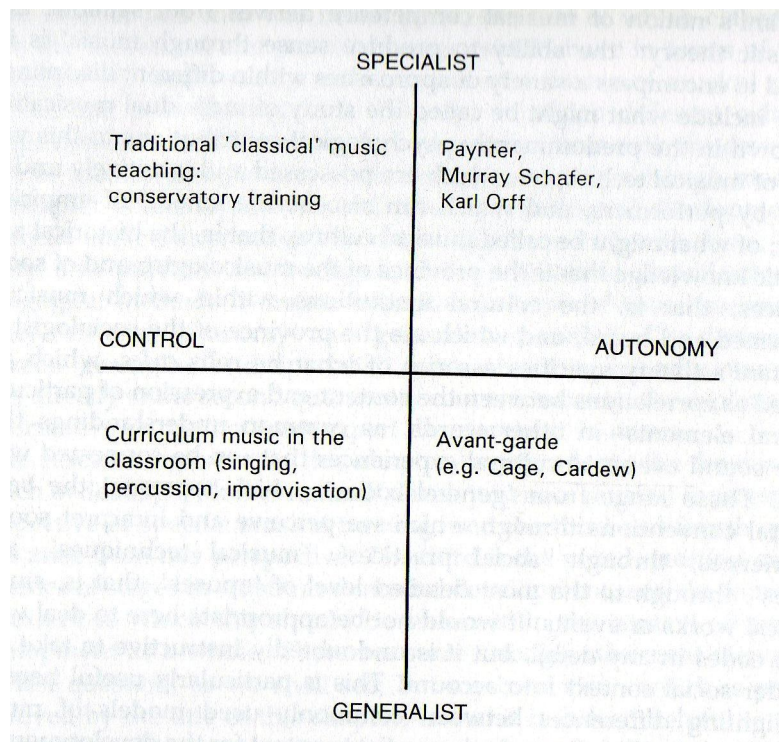


Figure 3: A model of teaching methods in music education (Hargreaves, 1996: 148).

Hargreaves describes the specialist element of music education as being linked more to instrumental tuition than to classroom teaching. Hallam (2006) highlights the general debate into whether specialist music education should cater for those 'who show particular interest in or aptitude for music' (p. 9) and whether such children might be catered for within specialist music schools both for teaching and/or extra-curricular activities. The issue of whether or not instrumental tuition should be a part of such a

specialist or generalist provision is an interesting one. For example, in-school instrumental lessons provided, in the main, by Local Authority music services, might be considered generally accessible, yet could also be considered as a specialist activity considering the financial commitments involved in learning an instrument for the vast majority of those who choose to do so (Philpott, 2001). The idea of specialist schools which cater primarily for children with an aptitude for music is also far from new, examples of which include Chethams and the Purcell School. What is being explored here is the possibility that *all* schools might cater only for those who have a particular interest and/or aptitude for music.

In addition to the specialist-generalist dimension, Hargreaves' model also serves to illustrate how music education is not only concerned with levels of attainment, but also with the pedagogical method applied within the teaching, and labels this dimension 'control-autonomy'. Hargreaves defines this distinction thus:

(Control-autonomy) refers to the extent to which particular educational practices emphasize creative improvisation on the part of the pupils, perhaps (but not necessarily) with relatively little emphasis on traditional instrumental technique... 'control-autonomy' can be thought of not only in terms of these aspects of the teacher's work, but also in terms of their corresponding effects on the pupils (Hargreaves, 1996: 149).

The model demonstrates that generalist classroom teaching, which all children from 5-14 in England and Wales are entitled to receive, can be applied readily to many classrooms across the country in which general musical skills are being taught, but still within 'a fairly constrained framework of conventional tonal music', (ibid.: 150) hence the justification for the control-generalist quadrant. To define generalist-autonomous is, Hargreaves acknowledges, much harder to achieve, and it should not be taken for granted that this is merely an 'anything goes' category; the author clearly states that the model is in this way 'approximate and provisional' and that 'it may well be possible to improve upon and define it' (p.150).

Despite difficulties in definition in this part of the model, the model as a whole arguably makes the process of understanding the differences

between specialist and generalist music provision much easier to understand and embeds it within a pedagogical framework, resulting in a clear link between theory and practice.

Keeping this model in mind, the discussion will return to Paynter's (2002) question of what makes music in the curriculum of educational value. He states that the justification for music in the curriculum for all lies not in the gathering of facts about music, but in giving children the opportunity to exercise and develop 'a very important human quality: the potential we all have to make art by making up music' (p.223). Essentially, of course, this can be achieved out of school, but the point of a school music education, to Paynter at least, is that there is no chance that any child will go without this experience:

Music may have a role in school life socially but, if it is to be a valuable *curriculum* subject, what is done in the classroom must reach out to every pupil; that is to say, it must exploit natural human musicality...it is the act of making that justifies the art (ibid.: 219).

Exploiting natural human musicality is, as Paynter goes on to say, involved with composing music, with exploring one's own musicality, but with the assistance of a teacher able to facilitate and encourage ideas; which is why music in school, when taught well, can provide the ideal opportunity for this to happen. Regelski (2005) writes on the differences between music experienced outside school and the benefits of 'doing' music with guidance in school:

...All students will have developed some musical skills, attitudes, and habits of appreciation prior to and outside of school. Given the conditions of...general education, then, music educators must think in terms of a *value added* approach where students are *newly or better able* to 'do' music as a result of instruction (Regelski, 2005: 21).

If composing music, with the guidance of a teacher, is therefore at the root of its justification, and it is desired that this should be experienced by all pupils, then there is certainly an argument against removing music from the curriculum if all children can benefit from a truly valuable and educational experience. At the same time, it must also be recognised that music

education must aim to achieve 'musical excellence' (Mills, 1998b) where possible so that potential professional musicians and others have the means by which to fulfil their potential as well as ensuring a musical curriculum fit for all. The art of effective differentiation can be difficult to refine, and it can certainly be a challenge to cater for the needs of a highly skilled instrumentalist with a wider knowledge of music and those who have had no prior training at all in the same class. In this way, it is understandable why specialist schools exist, and why there is an unavoidable necessity for those who require specialised instrumental tuition to seek this outside the school music lesson. In relation to this, Philpott (2001) highlights the fact that 'some writers have argued that "music for all" is unrealistic and that music education is essentially elitist, requiring the additional realm of instrumental tuition to achieve its (elitist) aims' (p.158).

The debate surrounding elitism is well versed within the field of music education and provides an interesting forum for discussion here. The message from the writers to which Philpott refers is that music education is inextricably linked with elitism, and that music is not really for all if we are truthful about it. Why is this so? Why is it not possible to have an elite group whilst still providing a rewarding and fulfilling music education for the majority? Indeed, what is wrong with having an elite? A great deal of the issue here could be argued to have more to do with the interpretation of the words 'elite' and 'elitism', both of which are often used with negative connotations. The Oxford English Reference Dictionary defines the two words as follows:

Elite: the best or choice part of a larger body or group.

Elitism: advocacy or reliance on leadership or dominance by a select group. (Pearsall and Trumble, 1996: 457).

Nowhere in the above definitions is there reference to the exclusion of the whole; the 'best part' and 'dominance' is seemingly more of an

acknowledgement that, in some circumstances, there is a group comprising those who have achieved a greater quality than the rest. In music, this should be seen as an inspiration for others, something perhaps to aspire to, not resent, and certainly not to dismiss the rest of the group as unworthy to experience: perhaps it would be fairer to say that music of a very high quality in terms of technical performance is unrealistic for all, but not as a generalist and valuable educational experience.

‘Music for all’ should be about the potential for all to take part in musical experiences under the guidance of a teacher in a school context, but at the same time to allow those who are more technically able and show promise to be able to flourish and fulfil their potential, even if this means having additional tuition by other music specialists. It should be accepted and embraced that some are going to perform better than others: elitism should not be confused with exclusion, which is how the term is often used. As Handford and Watson (2003) state:

Professional performers and great composers may form an elite, but they are not exclusivist unless they draw only from the ranks of a preferred stratum of society (Handford and Watson, 2003: 205).

Exclusion would be the prevention of someone participating in music (excepting the necessary audition process at many specialist institutions); the financial implications of learning an instrument, for example, which can incur personal costs including tuition fees and that of the instrument itself, can often deter and exclude potentially able musicians, (Hallam, 1998; Denny, 2007) thereby perpetuating the impression that music education is ‘elitist’ and not fit for all. The ideal situation would be that all who were capable and showed an interest in learning an instrument were able to do so, regardless of socioeconomic background, in the same way that music education in schools is available to all. Efforts have been made to achieve this in some Local Authorities, but there are still variations between schools as to the extent to which financial help is given to students (Philpott, 2001).

Certainly withdrawing music from the school curriculum could be deemed exclusive if alternative, adequate provision were not offered in its place as Sloboda (2001) suggests. Whether or not this provision should comprise music for all or some is dependent, to some extent, on what the agreed aims of music education are, if it is possible to agree and, as the above discussion has shown, this is not a debate to which an answer is easily identifiable.

Interim Summary

This part of the review has attempted to draw together various perspectives on whether or not music is a justifiable part of the school curriculum, not simply in terms of extra-musical transfer effects, but also in terms of the development of musical skills and the place of an aesthetic education in music and, crucially, how these may join together in order to provide an educationally valuable experience for some or for all. Sloboda (2001) suggested that we cater for music out of school to meet the needs of a new generation of children, calling for more personal choice and a greater flexibility of curriculum time, and that music in schools is not necessarily the medium through which this can be achieved. What Sloboda appears to be saying, as indeed both Paynter (2002) and Small (1996) suggest, is to focus on the creative and learn through process. There is an argument that this could be achieved in the classroom and that through an acceptance of music education as aesthetic education, rather than simply an accumulation of knowledge, this might add further justification for music in the school curriculum (Plummeridge, 1999; Finney, 2002).

There is no one element of a music education that points overwhelmingly to its purpose in schools. Pitts (2000) attempts to explain why this is so:

No single rationale emerges to solve this troublesome question of why music is in the curriculum at all...the reality is that none of the reasons discussed here seems sufficient justification on its own and this in itself points to the answer...music is an important part of the curriculum, with a role as indefinable as the place that music holds in so many lives (Pitts, 2000: 41).

The reality of Pitts' words may be difficult for some to accept, especially when there is a sense of the need to justify a subject that has been considered under threat (Bray, 2000; Sloboda, 2001). However, it must be remembered that over-zealous and unsubstantiated arguments for keeping music in the curriculum may do more harm than good, (Plummeridge, 2001) and that there is a need for realism in the evaluation of music education provision: if GCSE uptake rates are directly linked to music in school, then it is justifiable to explore the place of music in the school curriculum critically and to consider alternative provision which may improve uptake rates.

Returning to Pitts (2000), there is also the recognition of the importance of the child's other musical experiences, and the need to understand that a school music education only forms part of 'the child's musical world and identity' (Pitts, 2000: 41). Pitts urges us to be 'modest about the place of school music in the overall musical development of the child, and yet be ambitious about its provision, resourcing and variety' (p.41).

The nature of school music, therefore, may not form the basis of a decision on whether or not to continue with music to GCSE: other factors may be more influential. It is the musical identities of young people in and out of school, and their motivation to take part in music on all levels, that will form the focus of the next part of the review. It is hoped that this will further inform the discussion as to the importance of school music on GCSE uptake rates.

Literature Review Part 2

Factors influencing option choices

The writing of Pitts (2000) introduced to this review the concept that children's musical lives comprise an amalgamation of various influences, not just class music lessons. Music is enjoyed by adolescents outside of the classroom and the school, and musical tastes and preferences form part of an individual's overall identity (North *et al.*, 2000; Hargreaves *et al.*, 2002; Hargreaves *et al.*, 2003). This part of the review will look at which factors might motivate young people to continue with music to GCSE, in the context of both school and their everyday lives, and to what extent such factors might be influential in the decision-making process.

Towards a model of musical motivation

A key element of this study is to explore what motivates young people to continue with their musical studies beyond the compulsory curriculum at the end of KS3. In order to understand more about how children acquire musical motivation, it may be helpful to begin by looking at two models of motivation, and how these are relevant to the research problem.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model, cited by Lamont (2002), is a useful tool in understanding the contextual influences on children's lives, and provides a generic model of motivation:

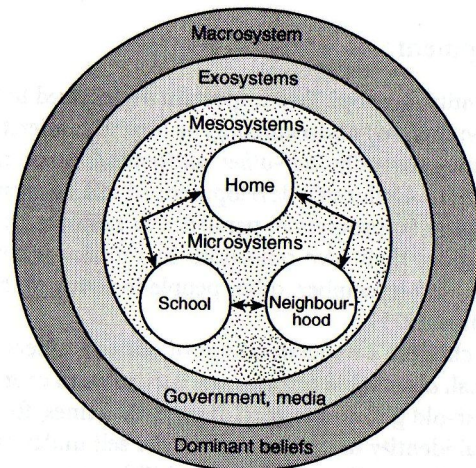


Figure 4: Bronfenbrenner's ecological model: contexts of development (Lamont, 2002: 42).

Brofenbrenner illustrates the influences of the immediate surroundings on the development of the child (termed the microsystems); the relationship between these (the meosystems); government and media influences, for example, the effects of policy on development (the exosystems); and finally, the values held by the culture and society in which the child lives (the macrosystem). The important point that Lamont makes following the introduction of this model is that we cannot separate such an ecological model from musical development; rather, we need to utilise it in order to gain a greater understanding of how children's musical identities, and musical motivation, develop over time. That is, we cannot ignore the potentially powerful influences of 'home', for example, in which parental or siblings' attitudes to education and, more specifically to music, may have a significant impact on a child's own perceptions and values. Broffenbrenner's model may help us to understand that the child's musical identities may be very much embroiled within a larger and more complicated 'circle' of influences.

The research of Hallam (2002) presents an alternative model which may be equally as helpful as Broffenbrenner's when considering factors internal and external which affect motivation, and can be readily applied to the study of musical motivation.

Hallam writes of the importance of acknowledging the wider context in music education research:

Any effective model of musical development needs to account for context, from the individual children's personalities, temperaments, characteristics and experiences, through the family, sub-cultural groups and school, to the wider society and ultimately humanity itself (Hallam, 2001: 14).

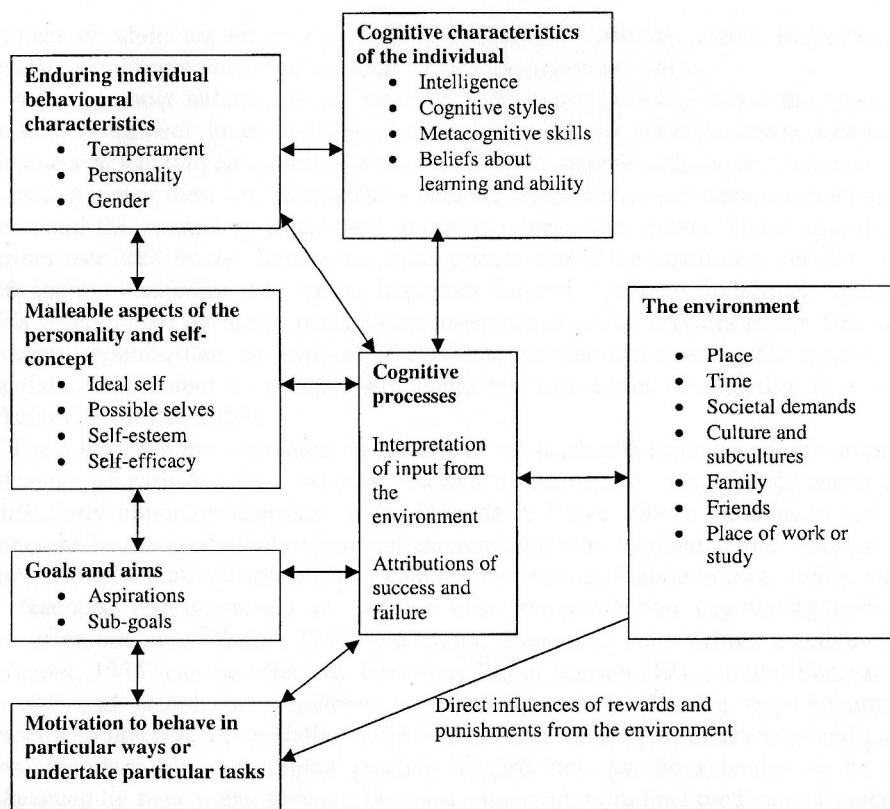


Figure 5: Interactions between individual and environmental factors in determining motivation (Hallam, 2002: 233).

Hallam's 2002 model of musical development is similar to Broffenbrenner's in terms of the acknowledgement of the influences of culture and family, but is more concentrated on the importance of individual attributes, such as temperament and cognitive characteristics, in understanding motivation. Although Hallam is referring specifically to motivation to continue playing a musical instrument, this model is arguably easily transferable to the study of motivation and values held by children towards music education generally.

Both models provide a useful starting point and serve as a reminder that musical identities cannot and should not be viewed as a simplistic facet of the individual, but as part of a complex amalgamation of the different factors presented by both Hallam and Broffenbrenner. The individual and their environment, and the complicated relationship between the two, should be borne in mind and reflected upon when discussing the role of

musical motivation on GCSE uptake rates. The discussion will now move on to the influence of the institution in musical motivation.

Musical motivation and the institutional environment

The concept of a 'musical identity' is one in which the individual is seen as an autonomous agent with regard to their personal tastes and preferences, but is also understood to be influenced by their peers and other contextual factors, as outlined in the models of motivation by Broffenbrenner and Hallam, and in the writing of Hargreaves *et al.* (2002).

Ten years ago, Olsson (1997) identified the need for music education research to become more focused on the impact of the institution on an individual's musical identity, believing that such research had thus far 'neglected interpersonal and institutional settings' (p.290). He urged for a more social psychological approach to music education research:

Research on music teaching and learning might therefore deal with social psychological concepts such as attitudes and preferences, motivations, teacher expectations, attributional styles, competencies, identities and institutions (Olsson, 1997: 291).

More recently, Lamont (2002) further supported the idea that schools, and teachers in particular, can have a great influence in children's musical experiences:

School is an important social context where messages about the value of music, and who music should be for, are transmitted effectively. Teachers, and the values they transmit within the classroom and beyond, also play a role in influencing children's attitudes towards music. This suggests that there is scope for school as a context for encouraging all children to develop a more positive musical identity (Lamont, 2002: 56).

Around the same time, Hallam (2002) noted the lack of emphasis within research on the potential importance between 'the institutional environment and motivation to engage with music' (p. 234).

Hallam did follow this statement by identifying certain research which had gone some way to exploring such matters, and suggested as a result of this that the 'institutional ethos may be an important factor influencing individual motivation' (ibid.: 234).

Since this time, there has been an attempt to look in more depth at the impact of school-based (considered formal), non-formal (supervised) and informal (non-supervised) musical learning and the link to motivation, particularly to continue with music post-KS3, through the Musical Futures Project (2004); this initiative shall be studied in greater depth later in the review.

To what extent, then, is the school environment, including class music lessons and extra-curricular activities, an influential factor in musical motivation? It could be tempting to dismiss the importance of the institutional environment in the belief that other external factors have a greater and longer-lasting influence. For example, the schools in which motivation levels in music are not very high in relation to enjoyment of class music at KS3 would surely be tempted to attribute this to other factors, such as socio-economic background, gender, departmental funding, or other influences which, at least in part, take the onus of responsibility away from the department (it is not being suggested that such schools would be unreasonable in holding these attributions). Moreover, how much responsibility should schools have in achieving high motivation levels in music, whether that is manifested in enjoyment in lessons, high uptake rates for GCSE, high levels of participation in extra-curricular activities, or a combination of all three? Indeed, are these appropriate and reliable indicators of high motivation levels in music? There are several factors which should be considered when trying to hypothesise the reasons for the comparatively lower uptake rate for GCSE music in relation to musical motivation, some of which will be discussed below.

Potential key factors affecting musical motivation

'Good' music teaching and the National Curriculum

If 'musical excellence', as Mills (1998b) argues, is the ultimate aim of a music curriculum, on whatever level, then there is little disagreement that schools vary widely in achieving this objective (QCA, 2003; Price, 2005). If in turn effective music teaching and positive pupil responses are part of this

excellence, then the crux of what constitutes 'effective' must be further explored, partly through the exploration and dissemination of good practice. This is particularly important to the present study, as good music teaching has often been linked to GCSE music uptake rates (Ross, 1995; Harland *et al.*, 2000; Bray, 2000). Indeed, Mills writes in *The Arts Inspected* in 1998 that 'schools where music is a popular choice at KS4 usually have good teaching and high standards at Key Stage 3' (Mills, 1998a: 78). What is being discussed here is more *the extent* to which good teaching can be attributed to uptake rates and Mills' use of the word 'usually' rather than 'always' is key.

Despite the rather depressive tone of Ross's (1995) paper, he makes some interesting comments about the possible roots of uninspiring music lessons. Ross states that one influence on the effectiveness of teaching, from the perspective of some music educators at least, is the curriculum itself. That is, some music educators believed that, at the time of Ross's article, the National Curriculum needed modernising to provide a more up to date programme of study that would be less out of touch with the young people for whom it was intended and, as Ross and Kamba (1997) write, 'a curriculum that loses touch with youth is doomed to irrelevance' (p. 62). Gammon's response to Ross (1995) in 1996 also mentioned the curriculum at the time to be 'rather prescriptive and certainly overloaded' (p. 107). There has since been recognition by relevant policy makers that the 1992 curriculum was not a finished article, and that improvements could and should be made. The later developments within the National Curriculum, first in the 1995 Orders followed by the 1999 Curriculum and most recently the 2007 Curriculum, have attempted to provide a curriculum that is neither too prescriptive nor too simplistic, yet allows for a recognition of the developing needs of students to study a variety of musical genres within a practically-based approach. It is not necessary to carry out a detailed evaluation of the National Curriculum past and present here, but one thing that can be said of the changes to the curriculum is that 'the sheer fact that

changes are made shows that national politicians value the place of music within education, and want it to be taught well' (Mills 2005b: 12).

The question of how much can we put the onus of good classroom teaching on the National Curriculum must be considered, however. It could be argued that primary school teachers, most of whom are generalists and not music specialists, would prefer a greater prescription from the National Curriculum in order to feel secure in their subject knowledge of music, and confidence has been reported as having a major influence on how primary school teachers perceive their abilities in music (Hennessy, 2000; Holden and Button, 2006). The usefulness of the National Curriculum, together with teachers' perceptions of their ability and their actual ability, are not always akin to success, though. The writing of Glover and Ward (1998) suggests that although a certain level of subject knowledge is necessary, it is more the relationship that primary class teachers have with their students, and their knowledge of the class as a whole, that can have the greatest effect on whether music is taught well or not; indeed, a non-specialist primary school teacher can produce higher levels of achievement in their own class than a specialist music teacher who visits the school and has only a superficial relationship with them (p. 176). Nevertheless, it is the case that the help of a music specialist in devising schemes of work in an advisory role is valued greatly by primary school head teachers, and may provide the best outcome for all concerned (Lamont *et al.*, 2003). Keeping with the somewhat simplistic idea that there is more to being an effective teacher than subject knowledge, Hargreaves (1986) quotes Her Majesty's Inspectors who said that '*what* music is taught is only slightly more important than the *way* it is taught' (HMI, 1985: 2). This was at the time, as indeed Hargreaves states, a refreshing stance on prioritising the importance of teaching methods together with an awareness of the developmental needs of the students, particularly effective in a situation in which the teachers know the students well and can respond to their educational and musical needs accordingly. Swanwick (1999) writes similarly on the challenges secondary school teachers face in integrating the

popular music genre into school music, a genre with which young people are so familiar outside of school, and the need to approach the teaching of this subject carefully. He almost echoes the HMI quoted by Hargreaves (1986) when he states that 'so much depends not on *what* is done but on *how* it is done, on the quality of musical engagement' (Swanwick, 1999: 38). How to provide students with quality musical engagement is seemingly at the heart of what makes music lessons successful and worthwhile, and is not easy to define. The many books and journal articles, not to mention conferences dedicated to exploring the best ways to teach music, are testimony to the fact that there is no one definitive way to reach students musically, although there is much room for the sharing of good practice (Plummeridge, 2001; Hennessy, 2001). *The Arts Inspected* (1998) provides a clear example of how good practice can be disseminated; at the same time, there needs to be an understanding that what works for one teacher or school may not work for another, as indeed Mills points out in the report (Mills, 1998a), but as members of the same profession, music teachers should be open to the sharing of ideas, and not exist in what can be for many a lonely vacuum of experience (Cox, 1999).

When assessing what constitutes good music teaching, and how this relates to the take up numbers at GCSE, it can be illuminating to explore the views of the students as well as teachers; to discuss with them how they perceive school music and how it relates to their option choices at the end of KS3, and the current study aims to explore the students' opinions in some depth. For now, the discussion will turn to a brief exploration of the impact of enjoyment of school music on uptake rates.

Enjoyment of school music

Although enjoyment of school music might be seen to be inextricably linked to good teaching, it should not be assumed that this is the case; lack of enjoyment of school music could be attributed to other factors, and further exploration is necessary.

On discovering that GCSE music was the most vulnerable art form at GCSE level, Harland's aforementioned (2000) research into *Arts Effectiveness in Secondary Schools* reported that:

These findings corroborate other research that has revealed that pupils at key stage 3 often see music as lacking in relevance to their current and future needs and that pupils' level of enjoyment in music decline significantly over the duration of key stage 3, thus culminating in lowest levels of entry to GCSE courses for any National Curriculum subject (Harland *et.al*, 2000: 297).

Harland *et al.* concluded that 'it was also clear that pupils' choices for key stage 4 were heavily influenced by their previous experiences during key stage 3' (ibid.: 569). We might hypothesise on the basis of these findings, therefore, that higher levels of enjoyment in art and drama lessons at key stage 3 may indeed be an influential factor in achieving higher GCSE uptake rates than music. There is a need to be cautious when taking such findings as absolute truth, however. Mills (2005b) critiqued the report of Harland *et al.*, pointing out several misgivings, including their findings on student enjoyment of lessons. Mills highlighted that the report had failed to make explicit the fact that, although music had a lower uptake rate than other arts subjects at GCSE, more students did actually report that they enjoyed music lessons more than art and drama. The claims that the report makes, therefore, are not fully founded, and could prove misleading: it cannot be assumed that lack of enjoyment of lessons at KS3 is directly influential in students' decisions whether or not to take GCSE.

It should also be acknowledged that there are wide variations of GCSE music uptake rates between schools (Bray, 2000). This may compound the assumption that the music departments which recruit a particularly low proportion of students for GCSE would be those in which student enjoyment of lessons is relatively lower than successfully recruiting departments. In some ways this would not be unreasonable, and it would perhaps be unrealistic to suppose that school music lessons do not have any impact on option choices.

Interestingly, the research of Lamont *et al.* (2003) suggests that, even whilst most students in their study enjoyed class music lessons in year 9 and were involved in extra-curricular activities, there were still only a small percentage of these who considered it as a viable option at KS4. Lamont *et al.* present here a picture in which enjoyment of school music appears not to have as great an influence on option choices as might be assumed; perhaps external factors such as parental and peer influences may have an equal or greater impact on a child's desire to continue with music post-KS3. The perceived discrepancy between music in school and out of school, and the resulting impact of this on option choices, will now be explored.

Music in school and out of school: students and teachers' perspectives

Attempting to define the exact reasons why students do not want to continue with music beyond KS3 is difficult. The assumption that lack of uptake in some schools is related exclusively to good teaching and enjoyment of lessons by students has already been challenged. If the puzzling phenomenon, as introduced in the research of Lamont *et al.* (2003), of children who enjoy music but who do not wish to continue with it, is to be further explored, it is necessary to look beyond the school institution. Music, perhaps more than any other subject in the school curriculum, with the possible exception of PE, forms a highly important part of adolescents' lives outside of school (Swanwick, 1999; North *et al.*, 2000; Durrant, 2001; Hargreaves *et al.*, 2002) and this cannot be ignored. Good teaching in school is one thing, but if children are going to value music in school and want to take part in it beyond the compulsory curriculum, then musical development which occurs out of school time should be explored. North *et al.* (2000) discuss the issue that secondary school music lessons from the ages of 11-14 comprised, at the time of their writing, the least popular stage of music education for children. With regards to the perceived problems of secondary school music, they state that:

It seems very likely that any solutions to these problems go well beyond the nature of teaching technique: as Ross suggests, it is probably more meaningful to consider the function of school music in teenagers' lives as a whole than to analyse individual lessons (North *et al.*, 2000: 256).

For some time, research has focussed on the reported dichotomy between children's musical activities inside school and those outside of school. A key difference between the two, most obvious in many respects, is the way in which children are able to control their own musical experiences outside of the school environment and with this experience greater autonomy than they might inside school. As Tarrant *et al.* (2002) write:

A prevalent theme throughout this research is the distinction between musical behaviour which takes place in formal (in school) and informal (out of school) contexts. While this distinction is unproblematic at primary level...at secondary level it becomes especially prominent as adolescents begin to de-value school-organized music, and instead begin to favour musical activities that they can organise themselves (Tarrant *et al.*, 2002: 134).

It may be no coincidence that the decreasing interest in music in school across the years 11-14, the first three years of secondary school, is also the beginnings of adolescence and a time of great transition for many children, emotionally and socially, during which they attempt to establish an identity (Hargreaves, 1996; Earl, 2003). It has been suggested that music forms an important part of this identity and provides a 'badge' for many young people, and that the impact of musical listening and the development of musical tastes outside school is important both on an individual level, and from the perspective of group identities and peer relationships (Durrant, 2001; Hargreaves and Marshall, 2003). The possibility that school music does not fit comfortably into this niche for many young people at this time is quite real, and it is for this reason that some have suggested that school music is out of touch with the needs of young people (Sloboda, 2001). The drastic measure of removing music from the school curriculum, as Sloboda suggests, rather than trying to find an alternative music curriculum which would still enable all children to be taught in the school setting and, most importantly, enjoy and value the experience, is arguably unnecessary, however; enabling a music curriculum which acknowledges the musical lives of children

outside of school in terms of autonomy of learning might be better received (Crozier, 1997; Hargreaves and Marshall, 2003). As Lamont *et al.* write:

Pupils responded positively to many different opportunities to develop and extend their musical activities both in and out of school, particularly in situations that blurred boundaries (such as music lessons where they could choose their own music to play or listen to) (Lamont *et al.*, 2003: 239-240).

Durrant (2001) also acknowledges the differences between music in school and music out of school and suggests that 'the tension between music in school and outside school may therefore be determined not by any curriculum content, but rather in the manner and context in which it is delivered and presented to adolescents' (p. 4). This brings to the fore again the debate as to the best way to cater for music education if school music is currently not addressing the needs of pupils.

It should also be considered, however, that the distinction between in school and out of school music by adolescents may not always cause negativity towards school music. That is, not all children will automatically 'de-value school-organized' music as they move into their adolescence (Tarrant *et al.*, 2002). As Lamont *et al.* (2003) report at the end of their paper on *Young People's Music in and Out of School*:

In particular, teachers and pupils in this study valued the role of music *in* the curriculum for both its musical and its extra-musical benefits, and did not support its reduction or, as Sloboda (2001) has recently suggested, its removal from the statutory curriculum (Lamont *et al.*, 2003: 238).

It must be recognised that the research of Lamont *et al.* is limited in the sense that the sample comprised a selection of secondary schools which were believed to have a generally more positive role towards the arts; the results may therefore not be fully representative, and the authors do make this clear. It should also be recognised that it is unclear as to the extent to which the students were receiving lessons which 'blurred the boundaries' between music in and out of school, (ibid.: 239-240) which may have resulted in a higher level of value attached to music in the sample schools than might have been observed in other schools. Limitations aside, the research

highlights that, in terms of GCSE uptake rates, a high level of value attached to music in school, by both students and teachers, does not necessarily positively correlate with increased uptake rates in music at KS4.

School music lessons, then, may be valued and enjoyed by students but still not be enough to persuade some to continue to GCSE. What of musical activities outside of the class music lesson? To what extent might involvement in extra-curricular music activities, including instrumental tuition either in or out of school, have on GCSE uptake rates? In terms of extra-curricular involvement in school, excluding instrumental tuition for now, the schools in the Lamont *et al.* study all offered some form of extra-curricular activity, and it was believed by the schools that such activities were 'vital to the school life' and, from the teachers' perspectives, pupils 'were seen to 'blossom' or 'take the initiative' in relation to a school production' (ibid.: 233). The schools in the study were also aware that that musical events provided a link with outside the institution, and teachers 'frequently mentioned the networks within and outside the school that helped them in their musical activities' (p. 234). Pitts' more recent qualitative study of a school musical production in 2007 showed how such an event can unite a school, with members of the wider school community being aware of the production even if they were not involved. The research of Denny (2007) found that involvement in extra-curricular activities did not simply promote social cohesion within the school, but also improved future aspirations of those taking part. However, although level of parental education was not deemed as important in this effect, Denny observed that parental income may restrict some from taking part in some activities, even if the parents and the children are enthusiastic for them to do so. Related to this, Pitts (2007) outlines recent initiatives such as Youth Music which has 'done much to ensure that schools in all socio-economic contexts have access to arts opportunities beyond the classroom' (Pitts, 2007:147). This inclusive attitude towards extra-curricular activities to ensure that all children can participate in music outside the classroom, not just those who can afford it, can help

students to prosper musically whilst at the same time closing the gap between music inside and outside of school which may have a bearing on GCSE uptake rates.

The question as to *how much* participation in extra-curricular activities impacts upon GCSE option choices is important, and there is little research which attempts to answer this empirically: the research of Denny (2007) contained a sample of only two schools; that of Pitts (2007) only one, and so although the results provide some useful suggestions and leads to further research, they cannot be considered generalisable and, in any case, did not set out to explore extra-curricular activities in relation to GCSE uptake rates. At this point in the study, research findings such as these can be used to make broad assumptions, but no strong claims. One of the few research articles to look specifically at GCSE uptake rates was that of Bray (2000), who undertook an exploration into the reasons why students may or may not consider taking GCSE music although, again, this did not comprise an empirical study. With regards to extra-curricular involvement, Bray presents students' involvement in extra-curricular activities as a potential barrier to some, perceiving that the 'small population' of those who are involved in such activities 'may contribute negatively towards the perceptions which the majority hold about school music' (p.86). This is at odds with Pitts' (2007) findings at the school in Sheffield, but it is possibly the case that, in some schools at least, there is an exclusivity associated with extra-curricular involvement which may not appeal to all members of a school community, rather to those who may be considered 'musical', either by themselves or by teachers. In this way, there is some confusion across the literature, rather than within it, as to the link between involvement in extra-curricular activities and musical motivation. We might assume that those who are involved in musical activities outside class music lessons are more likely to show an interest in GCSE music. Contrary to this, another consideration is that many of those involved in extra-curricular activities might not think that they need to take GCSE music, as they will still be able to partake in these

activities whether or not they choose the subject at the end of Year 9. Such students might rather study subjects at GCSE like art or drama which do not offer the same extra-curricular opportunities, generally speaking, as music (Hargreaves and Marshall, 2003).

The same might be said of the link between those who have instrumental lessons and the desire to take GCSE music. There is little research that makes explicit any relationship between the two, and we can only surmise that those who learn to play an instrument may be more likely to result in continuing music to KS4, although, as with other musical activities, students might feel that they could continue with their instrumental lessons whether or not they choose GCSE music, which, of course, they could. Intrinsically, there is nothing wrong with the latter sentiment. What is important to this study, though, is to ascertain whether there is a link between those who play a musical instrument and an interest in taking GCSE music; if there is a high correlation, then what is important to consider is how to encourage all children who start learning to play an instrument to continue, currently a concern specifically across the primary-secondary transfer years (Mills, 1996; Sloboda, 2001; Lamont *et al.*, 2003) and with boys in particular (Price, 2005).

Bray (2000) also makes the point that the gap between music in school and out of school may be related, to a certain extent, to the differences between children's musical preferences and the musical genres with which most teachers feel comfortable, given the largely classical background of the majority of teacher trainees (Sloboda, 2001; Handford and Watson, 2003). Furthermore, it is acknowledged by Bray (2000) and Lamont *et al.* (2003) that 'the authenticity of secondary school music, and its relation to music outside school, is an important issue for teachers as well as pupils' (ibid.: 230). This could be linked to a difference in musical identities between teachers and pupils and 'understanding the relationship between the developing musical identities of pupils and teachers may produce new insights and solutions to practical problems' (Hargreaves and Marshall, 2003: 272). In other words,

teachers could be taught to adopt new teaching strategies in order to incorporate popular music styles within the classroom in ways which reach out successfully to students; a positive attitude to popular music does not always equate to effective teaching of it, and the link between theory and practice must be acknowledged in this respect (Green, 2002; Swanwick, 1999).

Before going on to look at other factors which may affect GCSE uptake rates, it may help to introduce some government initiatives which have acknowledged the discrepancy between in school and out of school musical experiences, and have tried to assess and improve the quality of KS3 music provision. The impact of these on GCSE music uptake rates will be discussed as well as the relevance of these initiatives to this study.

Music Education Improvement: some current initiatives

The Music Manifesto and the Musical Futures Project, both initiated in 2004, aim to explore the musical lives of young people, both in and out of school, with a view to widening participation, and place an emphasis not only on the need to assess music provision by reporting on the standards being achieved, but also on actively trying to improve them. The National Strategy for Music also identifies the need to improve music provision at KS3, and aims to reach all schools and music services with a view to making music education 'challenging, vigorous and inspiring' for all students (Music Manifesto, 2006: 53). These initiatives, which some may argue were desperately needed, appear to make an attempt to address the void in music education improvement that was previously reported:

If school music provision is to secure the interest of pupils in 'school music', an urgent and well-resourced programme of professional development may be needed to allow many teachers to learn from those teachers and schools that are achieving substantial outcomes and above-average GCSE enrolment rates in the subject (Harland, *et al.*, 2000: 297).

In relation to the current study, the Musical Futures Project, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, is worthy of particular attention and so will provide the basis for the most detailed discussion at this point in the review. Like the Music Manifesto, the Project is committed to working with schools

and communities in order to decipher what makes music education successful in some schools and what can be done to improve it in others. This three-year research project has explored different approaches to music education across three Pathfinder Local Authority Music Services. What is interesting is that the rationale for the Project can be linked to Olsson's (1997) aforementioned ideology of the music education research of the future, most notably to discover what motivates young people to engage with music, and to build upon these findings in order to close the perceived gap between music in school and music out of school:

Too often music education is disconnected from a burning musical passion in their lives and fails to harness this passion to provide a motivational pull to learn... (the project) seeks to build on pre-existing knowledge of what makes some practitioners and projects so engaging to young people by identifying the common principles and actions underlying this work (Jaffrey, 2005: 3).

Although there is a seemingly underlying assumption of the Project team that the weight of responsibility to engage students in music is primarily on practitioners, rather than acknowledging the important influences of family and friends (Hallam, 2006), the overall aim of the Project is very much in line with the purpose of this thesis: to understand the potential of school music to contribute towards the continued motivation of young people, including the desire to take GCSE music, and examine how successful approaches might be replicated to reach as many students as possible.

The pioneers of the Musical Futures Project also recognise the multi-dimensional foundations of music education. That is, music education is not just about a class of 30 children and a teacher, but a more complex interaction between staff in school, including peripatetic instrumental teachers, and those who organise and run non-formal activities out of school hours, all contributing to the musical life of the young person. There is a widespread belief by the researchers that there has been for too long a disassociation, not just from students but from educators, between the formality of music in the school and the informality of out of school musical

activities, as has been discussed previously in this review. The project leaders put forward five fundamental actions for innovation which, if attempted within both the formal and informal sector, could herald the beginning of major changes in how music education is delivered and received. The five fundamentals are:

1. Transforming Music Leadership
2. Personalising Music Learning
3. Organising Musical Routes
4. Redefining Music Training
5. Supporting Young Musicians

Returning to the problem in recruiting higher numbers to take GCSE music, it is interesting to read the findings from the three Pathfinder Local Authorities. The Ofsted evaluation of the project carried out in 2006 indicated that 'there were signs of increased take-up of music at GCSE level', (Ofsted, 2006: 2) but did acknowledge that this key finding could not be generalised given that 'the number of schools involved in this sample was very small' (ibid.: 2). So, what was the underlying cause of the greater interest in continuing formal music provision based on the musical futures initiative? Reading further through the Ofsted evaluation, it seems that the second fundamental of the project, personalising musical learning, held the key to much of the reported success within the Pathfinder schools. The basic premise of personalising learning is to listen more to the 'student voice' and adhere to the students' musical tastes and preferences through a performance-based curriculum delivered in a more informal way. Returning to the importance of the social psychological aspect of music highlighted by Olsson (1997), the musical futures project team note a key finding from within their pathfinder schools relating to the concept of personalising learning:

...schools can make their music provision more vital, and closer to their students' external experience of music, by recognising the *social* importance which students place upon the activity, and designating accommodation accordingly (Price, 2006a: 7).

Moreover, the approach of tailoring learning processes more carefully to the needs and interests of the students promoted a greater level of

motivation, and the leaders of the musical futures project argue that 'no deep learning can take place without it' (ibid.: 8).

Despite these positive findings, is there a danger that if schools cater solely towards what the children themselves want, we are limiting the amount of experiences open to young people? For example, it could be reasonably judged that students are most interested in popular music outside of school, so music staff in schools should therefore be teaching primarily about this genre of music in order to elicit the best response and thus the greatest motivation. Is the worry then the risk of limiting the musical experiences of the child, including the introduction of musical types that they are less likely to have developed an appreciation for outside school, such as classical music?

Handford and Watson (2003) argue that whilst teachers should recognise the diversity of tastes of young people, music teachers should avoid making music 'immediately 'entertaining' to everyone' (p. 204). This is an important point: although teachers should be keen not to alienate students through the sole study of unfamiliar musical genres, such genres should equally not be omitted from the curriculum for fear that music lessons may lose some of their popularity. Furthermore, surely it is the duty of the teacher to introduce music with which the students are unfamiliar? Otherwise, there is a possible risk that a generation of students will leave the music curriculum at the end of KS3 with a very narrow perception of the breadth of musical genres available for exploration and the possibility that 'the living heritage of classical music in this country is under grave threat' (ibid.: 199). The key, it seems, according to the Musical Futures Project, is in the *approach* that is taken and in the balance of the curriculum delivered by schools. Certainly the National Curriculum for Music (QCA, 2007) allows a freedom of choice for secondary school teachers in this respect; although teachers are required to cover a wide variety of musical genres across KS3, there is no prescription as to the exact amount of curriculum time that must be spent on each. This could be regarded positively, especially when the

curriculum is manipulated to provide students with a well-balanced music education (Cox, 1999).

Moreover, a heavy weighting towards any type of music, classical or popular, is arguably not providing a well-rounded musical education which should be the ultimate aim. It might be that a music curriculum with a greater emphasis on popular music may enhance motivation more than one based on classical music, due to the familiarity of the former genre, but there is a sense that teachers would be doing a disservice to both music education in general, and to their students in particular, by following this route. There is also the awareness by music staff that a music curriculum should cater equally for those who wish to take music beyond Key Stage 3 to GCSE and perhaps further, and a concern that the broadening of the curriculum over the past 15 years, although positive in increasing 'the relevance of music to individual pupils', may heighten the 'lack of time and opportunity to teach and experience more traditional classical musical skills...and may disadvantage pupils hoping to follow that route' (Lamont *et al.*, 2003: 233).

The perspective of the Musical Futures team on this issue is made clear, and although they acknowledge the importance of the introduction of musical genres with which the students engage outside of school, they do not suggest a total leaning towards this. Instead, they recognise that 'their (the students) motivation lay, not with the genre, or even the piece, but in the *learning process* involved' (Price, 2006a: 10), which is very much in line with Hargreaves' (1986) and Swanwick's (1999) emphasis on not *what* is taught, but *how* it is taught, outlined previously in this review. Folkestad (2006) also urges for a balance not only of genres taught within music lessons, but also in the approach taken to teach them, promoting the use of informal and formal teaching styles in order to recognise the differences in learning processes which happen inside and outside the classroom:

Formal-informal should not be regarded as a dichotomy, but rather as the two poles of a continuum; in most learning situations, both these aspects of learning are in various degrees present and interacting. Music education researchers...need to focus not only on the formal and informal musical learning in Western societies and cultures, but also to include the full

global range of musical learning in popular, world and indigenous music in their studies (Folkestad, 2006: 135).

The Musical Future Project's summary of key findings also links high levels of motivation relating to the enhanced curriculum with increased GCSE uptake rates:

This enriched curriculum raised student motivation to exceptionally high levels and surveys show almost half of the students expressing a desire to continue with music beyond KS3 (Price, 2007b: 8)

Ofsted evaluated the impact of the Project on uptake rates in one Pathfinder school as follows:

Emerging signs are positive: for example the increased take up of music at GCSE level (in one case from 22% to 33%)...Some of the pupils taking GCSE were very clear that they would not have taken it without the new experiences in KS3 (Ofsted, 2006: 4-5).

A practical emphasis, with a much greater value placed on the role of the student as leader and facilitator of their own learning, seemed to provide a successful learning process and output for the three Pathfinder schools involved in the Project, including increased GCSE uptake rates. This key finding suggests, albeit involving a very small sample, that teaching styles may indeed have a positive influence on children's desire to take GCSE music by minimising the gap between music in and out of school.

In terms of this thesis, it will be interesting to explore how the findings of this study, involving a larger sample of schools, relate to those of the Musical Futures Project, and to the philosophy of the Music Manifesto. Both initiatives will be referred to in the discussion of the findings. The discussion will now move towards the impact of perception of GCSE music on option choices.

Perceptions of music GCSE

Another factor which may affect option choices is the perception that pupils at KS3 hold towards music GCSE. The act of perception itself can be difficult to define, and Button (2006) states that perception is a 'process of active (rather than passive) construction' and that it is 'the way an individual

feels and thinks about other people or objects that determine the way in which they are categorised' (p.418 - 419). In relation to music education, this might mean that 'pupils who perceive music in a positive vein express positive attitudes towards musical activity' (p.419). Hallam (2006) suggests how the expectancy-value models used in psychological research can be utilised to consider motivation to engage with music, and might help us to understand how pupils' perceive musical activity:

Expectancy-value models have three main components: value components –students' beliefs about the importance and value of the task(s); expectancy components – students' beliefs about their ability or skill to perform the task; and affective components – students' feelings about themselves or their emotional reactions to the task (Hallam, 2006: 145).

In terms of perception of GCSE music, expectancy components might certainly have an impact on students' option choices; some may view music at KS4 as an elitist subject, only available for those who hold high levels of instrumental skill and who are considered musical. The question of what constitutes a 'musical' person is one that is arguably very difficult to answer, and the debate raised at the beginning of the introduction to the thesis highlights the dichotomy, particularly in Western society, between the perceived 'musical professional' and the questionably unmusical other. With regards to GCSE uptake rates, similar concerns were being voiced not long after the introduction of GCSE music in 1986. Spencer's research into undergraduate opinions of GCSE music states that:

There remains a gulf in perceptions of school music between the majority who have not had the good fortune to acquire instrumental and music reading skills outside the confines of the classroom, and the minority who have (Spencer, 1993: 73).

What is particularly concerning is that, despite these relatively early concerns raised about the differences in perception between those who have had access to music tuition outside the classroom and those who have not, and the potential impact of this on uptake rates, it seems that, from reading the literature across the 14 years since Spencer's article, not a great deal has changed. Wright's (2002) research into the status of the GCSE music examination amongst secondary school students revealed that:

There is strong evidence from this survey to suggest that they are at a disadvantage on a GCSE music course unless they receive instrumental tuition outside the classroom...the GCSE syllabus is not perceived as serving the wide range of abilities and backgrounds for which it was designed, and can therefore be seen as elitist (Wright, 2002: 238-239).

Although the sample in Wright's study is too small to be generalisable, it provides an interesting comparison with Spencer's research and a useful starting point for a debate about what the GCSE examination is actually for: should it be to provide a qualification for the technically able musicians, or as an opportunity for all students, regardless of their previous attainment level? In terms of attainment, Bray's (2000) examination of GCSE uptake rates highlighted the fact that although GCSE uptake rates are consistently lower than those of art and drama, the results are consistently better, suggesting that 'the pupils taking music are more able, more talented or more experienced (and therefore capable of achieving better results than the cohort as a whole)' (Bray, 2000: 83).

In some ways, it might be considered advantageous that a subject is achieving good grades in relation to others; this might even positively counterbalance the fact that it is recruiting lower numbers to take it. What is more concerning is the thought that potential students are being put off due to a lack of information pertaining to the examination requirements, thus resulting in possibly, not definitively, inaccurate perceptions. These might include the belief that music at GCSE is going to be too difficult for all but the technically musical few, and does not denote a natural stepping stone in musical achievement from KS3, which would go against the rationale of GCSE music as providing an 'examination for all' (Wright, 2002). Central to this review, the research of Lamont *et al.*, (2003) whom reported high levels of enjoyment of music by students at KS3, yet low interest in continuing the subject to GCSE, included student perceptions of GCSE music as being a key element in the decision-making process:

Very few pupils expressed an interest in taking GCSE music. The reasons for this were also varied: music was seen as a highly specialist subject at this level, open only to those with considerable instrumental skill...(Lamont *et al.*, 2003: 236).

Art and drama, on the other hand, do not have any obvious learning requirements, such as instrumental lessons, external to class lessons, and this should be considered as a potential factor in the relatively lower number of GCSE music candidates. Bray (2000) also lists student perceptions of the need for 'prior experience and expertise on a musical instrument, perhaps gained through instrumental lessons' (p.87) as a possible reason for lower uptake rates. Bray goes on to introduce the idea that teachers may also discourage those who do not learn an instrument to a certain level from taking the subject, perceiving, perhaps correctly, that they and the student would struggle to achieve a good grade without this extra tuition. Teacher attitudes could prove as much of a problem as student perceptions in this respect (Hewitt, 2005) and, in any case, the question of how much class music lessons can really prepare a student for GCSE music is relevant. Wright (2002) suggests that options to alleviate the problem of preparing students for the practical element of GCSE music, without the need for separate instrumental lessons, include the teaching of instrumental skills in lesson time at KS3, and/or in increasing the status of singing in lower school music so that more students might consider this as an option instead of learning to play an instrument. With regards to learning instrumental skills in lesson time, how realistic is it for teachers to effectively teach instrumental skills, which usually take place in small groups by peripatetic teachers in school, or one-to-one tuition out of school, to 30 or so children, and the rest of the curriculum? This would involve the need for students to have access to many more hours of music curriculum time a week, and even then would prove logistically challenging.

In relation to raising the status of singing at KS3, it is arguable that students who do then select singing as an option for GCSE may still require lessons outside of class lessons in order to have the same chances as their peers who have had the extra tuition; to belittle the need for singers to develop their technique in the same way as other instrumentalists is almost

akin to suggesting that the voice does not hold the same status as other instruments, which would rightly prompt a heated debate amongst vocalists. Furthermore, Philipott (2001) cites the research of Tim Cain (1989) who found that although students could achieve the top grades at GCSE without extra tuition, it was more likely, unsurprisingly in many respects, that they would do better with extra tuition, and would indeed need this in order to 'keep up' with their peers. Cain concludes that:

Those pupils who did not have extra vocal or instrumental tuition may have done less well precisely because they were to some extent competing against those who did (cited in Philipott, 2001: 160).

Returning to Wright's (2002) suggestion of recruiting more students to take GCSE music by alerting them to the opportunity of using their voice as their instrument in GCSE performance exams, there is no acknowledgement in her paper of the link between vocal performance and self identity. Monks (2003) found that 'the sense of vocal identity shown by these young singers reveals a close relationship with their sense of self' and that 'adolescent singers are very aware of the vocal changes that occur during puberty and the effects of this on their performance' (p. 253). It is likely, particularly with boys, that the physical changes which occur during adolescence would put off many from choosing the option of singing at GCSE, even if they were encouraged to do so. Durrant (2001) cites his own research which supports the notion that 'boys have a tougher time. They have an identity crisis...much more of a problem. They become self-conscious. For those whose voices have not yet changed it becomes problematic. Those with early changes just won't sing' (p.6). As the vocal changes experienced by boys are likely to coincide with option choices, it may not provide the greatest incentive to be assured by a well-meaning teacher that 'it's alright, you can sing if you can't play an instrument'. What was also interesting in Durrant's (2001) report was that, despite his observations of the self-consciousness of boys of secondary school age to sing, many were very keen to take part in a production of West Side Story in one school, despite the fact that the teacher

reported that she 'would never be able to get the (same) boys to sing in the choir' (p.7). This is suggestive of the advantages of providing a GCSE qualification with varying routes to assessment; instead of the traditional small-scale recording of a solo performance, should there perhaps be more emphasis on using performances taken place within extra-curricular activities, possibly inside and outside of the school setting, as a means of assessment?

It must be considered, however, that the chance to use singing as the instrument of choice at GCSE, with or without extra-curricular singing lessons, might be a possible route to increased uptake at GCSE, as might be a greater emphasis on the teaching of instrumental skills in lesson time. Either way, if more children are to embark on music courses post-KS3, as they do for art and drama, then GCSE music has to appeal as a natural next step after KS3 and, as Wright reports, it is simply not viewed as such. Perhaps it is the case that schools are not marketing the qualification very well, themselves putting prospective students off the subject by inadvertently presenting the subject as only fit for those who are 'musical'.

Returning to the idea of the expectancy-value model, there must also be the consideration that students do not see music as a viable option, and do not attach much 'value' to it as a subject beyond KS3, perceiving it as 'not relevant or necessary for careers in other kinds of music-related businesses' (Lamont *et al.*, 2003: 236). This may not necessarily come simply from the students themselves, but may also be communicated, inadvertently or otherwise, from parents, friends and even teachers of other subjects within the school. Several studies have indicated the importance of family on encouraging musical development, although not so much related to GCSE uptake rates specifically, more associated with learning an instrument and being motivated to practise (Hallam, 2006; Williamon, 2004). Nevertheless, it is arguably reasonable to suppose that parental attitudes might also be influential in encouraging children to take GCSE or not, as the case may be. As Bray states, 'music may be perceived as unimportant by parents who

transmit this view to their children, perhaps reflecting negative feelings about their own music education. This may reflect perceptions that music is not a vocationally useful subject' (Bray, 2000: 87). Additionally, Button (2006) conducted research which looked at KS3 pupils' perceptions of music in relation to gender and suggested on the basis of his findings that 'the results imply that parents of male pupils may not perceive music in terms of a career or in terms of their sons' aesthetic growth and emotional development' (p. 427). This was presented in contrast to parents of female pupils who 'appear to view music as an important factor in facilitating and enriching their daughters' artistic growth' (p.427). Button linked the differential attitudes of parents towards their children as a possible cause, 'in part, for the larger number of female pupils who opt for music at GCSE level': it will be interesting to see how gender impacts upon the findings in the current study.

Financial issues may also be an issue for parents, certainly as far as instrumental lessons are concerned (Hallam, 1998; Philpott, 2001). Although it is the case that some Local Authorities subsidise instrumental lessons, it is not always available across all Authorities and from primary school right through to secondary school; given that students are more likely to get better grades at GCSE level if they undergo instrumental tuition, (Cain, 1989) and this may be considered as common sense by parents, the perceived financial constraints for some may deter them from encouraging their children to take music and opt for art or drama instead, both of which do not appear to induce any financial burden on children's families. Interestingly, however, Bray (2000) found that there 'appeared to be no link between free school meals and GCSE music uptake rates', (p.85) and so it cannot be assumed that the cost of instrumental lessons are deterring a significant number of pupils; another explanation for Bray's finding could also be the perception from students that you do not need to play an instrument well to take music GCSE, although this would go against the findings of Wright (2002) and Lamont *et al.*, (2003).

The present study will attempt to explore further the perceptions of students of GCSE music, and the extent to which this might affect uptake rates.

Interim Summary

Having identified a necessary niche for school music in the overall construction of positive musical identities, whilst at the same time acknowledging the influences of other contributory factors on musical motivation, there is still the question of *how much* school music can realistically be expected to influence KS4 option choices. For those researchers who maintain that the quality of school music is one of the main indicators of recruitment success (Ross, 1995; Mills, 1998a; Harland *et al.*, 2000; Sloboda, 2001), what aspect of school music is responsible? Does the participation in extra-curricular musical activities play a greater role than class music lessons, or vice versa, as discussed? Are those children who learn to play an instrument more likely to continue beyond KS3, and to what extent do children's perceptions have an influence on option choices? Durrant (2001) outlines the difficulty in understanding the reasons for disillusioned students not wishing to take GCSE music. He cites Andrew, a boy who now has a job as an arts administrator and who, at the time of Durrant's interview with him, very much enjoyed music outside of school but did not see the point of taking GCSE music due to his reported lack of enjoyment of school music lessons:

The question as to whether this is a consequence of poor teaching, a reflection of the status of the arts, and music in particular, in schools, or simply the nature of adolescence in relation to musical behaviour is key (Durrant, 2001: 1).

Durrant's question is also key to this thesis: despite the example of Andrew, low uptake rates are not always indicative of lack of enjoyment of class music at KS3, as is evident in the research of Lamont *et al.* (2003), and so we cannot yet be sure of the precise reasons why some children give up music at the end of KS3.

Nevertheless, it should be recognised that schools do have a contributory role in reinforcing or raising motivation levels, to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the school and the stage of development at which the students are at, educationally, emotionally, socially and physically. Even with the possibility that school music can help all students to develop and maintain a positive musical identity, this does not guarantee, even less explain, why there is not a higher proportion of students opting to continue beyond KS3. The current study will attempt to provide some suggestions for this puzzling phenomenon through an empirical investigation in order to add to the existing literature.

Exploring the reasons why young people may or may not continue to GCSE music is an important part of this thesis. Another issue, to be considered more fully now, is why this matters and the wider impact of relatively lower uptake rates in music. The implications on all involved in music education will form the basis for the next and final part of the review.

Literature Review Part 3

GCSE Uptake Rates and the Educational Ladder: Pedagogical Implications

The aim of the thesis is primarily to explore the reasons why there are fewer numbers opting to take GCSE music than other foundation subjects such as art or drama. Leading on from this question has to be the consideration of why does it matter, and what are the implications? I found myself asking these questions recently at a day conference on music teacher recruitment. The conference was held at the Royal Northern College of Music and all delegates were invited to listen to a local band of about 12 young musicians perform whilst waiting for their lunch. The music was of a very high standard, and the musicians clearly took a great deal of pride in their performance. At some stage during the proceedings, they were introduced by a College representative who informed us that 'only one of them has taken GCSE music', to which there was an intake of breath from the crowd, all of whom were involved in music education in some capacity. This was a staggering thought; my first instinct was to race up to them and immediately enquire 'why not?', but the opportunity did not arise, (and perhaps I may have saved myself a red face) as they continued to play for some time. It seemed unthinkable that all but one of such a talented group of musicians had not taken GCSE music, the first step in musical progression after the compulsory curriculum; somehow, this highly able group of musicians had not wanted to continue formal music education beyond the age of 14, and this very visual and aural representation made me determined to explore why not. It may be that they felt they did not need GCSE music to be musicians, and I would agree with this to a point; indeed, if children enjoy and value music at KS3, does it really matter too much whether or not they continue to GCSE and beyond? Much more worrying, however, is the thought that GCSE music is generally undervalued and/or incorrectly perceived by potential students throughout the early secondary school years, and this issue needs to be investigated (Bray, 2000; Wright, 2002).

So, what is the potential impact of comparatively low uptake rates? Is it really a problem that music recruits fewer students at GCSE than other arts subjects, as Bray (2000) suggests? Perhaps the assumption that lower numbers at GCSE is a negative issue should be under question; perhaps quality, based on the better examination results in music at least, over quantity is a good thing for formal music education depending on whether it is decided that music GCSE is fit for purpose, and leads to the question of what GCSE music is actually for. This perspective raises again what could be for many a controversial debate on exclusivity and music education. If only a select number of students are ever going to opt for music, then perhaps music should be removed as an option from the school curriculum at KS4, and musically able students catered for by specialist music schools, as Paynter (2002) and Sloboda (2001) suggest? As an alternative, KS4 music may comprise not of a GCSE, but of a series of less academic courses in which any student could partake. Bray argues that the low uptake of GCSE music could be a key factor in the future demise of the subject at KS3:

We could be in danger of losing music as a subject in the school curriculum for younger pupils during some future review. After all, what is the point if 93% do not want to carry on with it? As music educators, we know the answer to this question, because we believe in the value of the subject. It seems timely to consider ways in which we can make it more attractive to our 'customers' (Bray, 2000: 88).

Aside from the potential dangers facing the position of music in the school curriculum, which has been discussed within the review in some depth so far, there is also another possible implication of fewer numbers taking GCSE music. In my job as teacher trainer of PGCE secondary music students, this has been suggested through the observation of several closures of fellow training courses: fewer students opting to take GCSE music, and then A-level and degree level, may possibly result in fewer numbers applying to train to teach, and there is a current shortage of secondary school music teachers as it is (Price, 2006b: 7). The College representative at the conference stated that 'if we can't recruit musicians like this to take GCSE music, then

what hope do we have of recruiting them to teach it?', and this should be considered.

Moreover, in terms of the influence of school music on option choices, there is perhaps some justification in thinking that students' memories of class music at KS3 may have an impact not only on whether they choose to take GCSE music, but also on whether they will choose to become secondary school music teachers later in the future, however spurious a link this might appear. The work of Mills (2005a) supports this thinking to a degree in her research exploring the reasons why conservatoire students may or may not choose to become secondary music teachers. In this study, she identifies that very few of the participants regard teaching music as 'doing' music, and that this is a major reason behind why the students do not view music teaching as a viable career option. Although Mills does not explicitly state that this is *because* of the students' own experiences of class music at KS3, it is a possible association worthy of attention. This is especially so due to the fact that after a sample of Mills' participants had spent some time in a secondary school music department, their attitudes towards teaching as an option became more positive, although Mills is careful to point out that these findings were not analysed quantitatively. One student commented that 'the imaginative way that the teachers taught the curriculum was really impressive' (p. 73) and provides some scope for reflection. In particular, there is the possibility that the imaginative teaching methods employed by the observed teacher in Mills' study may have created a lasting impression in the mind of the initially sceptical conservatoire student, had they been taught by this teacher at a younger age: would this positive experience then have lead more towards a desire to teach music in preference to a performance career? It must be reiterated that there is no suggestion of this by Mills, and the link is purely speculative, but forms part of the inspiration of this thesis to study the experiences and views of teacher trainees and undergraduate music students in order to explore this idea further. The aforementioned Musical Futures Project also aims to assess the effectiveness of school music teaching

in relation to the impact on numbers recruited beyond KS4 to A-level and teacher training, and the documentation justifies the relevance of this:

It may seem curious to be examining the transition between Key Stages 3 and 4 when discussing music education training, but through Musical Futures student music leader projects we have witnessed many students becoming enthused about the process of helping others make music, only to have their aspirations to music leading dulled through what they see as an uninteresting and irrelevant post-16 academic route (Price, 2006b: 8).

Whatever the reasons behind the relatively lower uptake in GCSE music, the worrying paucity of musicians choosing to become secondary school music teachers is indicative that, therefore, at some point further up the educational ladder from GCSE music, it really could matter.

Acquiring GCSE music demonstrates that a nationally recognised standard has been met and equips the candidate with the knowledge and skills necessary to continue further if desired. In order to fulfil the entrance requirements of most further and higher education courses in music, including the PGCE in secondary music, GCSE music will be expected, and is indeed necessary as an accepted grounding in knowledge in addition to other musical qualifications where appropriate. Schools need well-qualified music teachers, orchestras and opera houses need capable and well-trained musicians to fill them, and if interest in studying music at GCSE continues to decline, there is the potential for a knock-on effect on a part of our national musical culture. It is accepted that obtaining GCSE music is not always the key and irrevocable prerequisite to further musical training, but there is arguably every chance that the declining numbers are widely indicative of present and future problems in recruiting students going on to study music at KS4/degree level/secondary teacher training. It could also be argued that recruiting higher numbers of students opting to take GCSE music would surely be a sign that school music is fulfilling more than just a gap in the curriculum, in addition to the extrinsic and intrinsic benefits already discussed earlier in the review? It is vital that students are motivated to continue with formal music education training if they are capable, and that they are not being de-motivated by their experiences of school music at KS3.

It is important that this issue is addressed so that the revolving cycle of musical education and development of skills that comes with this can continue to sustain and enrich our musical heritage (Swanwick, 1992).

If it is found that school music, curricular or extra-curricular, is largely influential in the motivation of students to continue to KS4 music and beyond, this will have implications for the training of teachers and University courses as well. This idea fits in particularly with the Musical Futures Project: if the personalised learning approach of this Project is supported by the findings of the current study, that a far more practical-based curriculum is advantageous in improving numbers taking GCSE music, encompassing a variety of musical genres, this must be recognised by those educating music students both at undergraduate level and within teacher training departments. Sloboda (2001) undertook a study involving 750 heads of music and found that 78% of them had degrees based in classical music. Although this in itself is not necessarily a problem, research has shown (Green, 2002, Hargreaves and Marshall, 2003) that teachers trained in the classical tradition are far more likely to teach within their comfort zone, rather than attempting new approaches exploring unfamiliar subject knowledge territory such as popular or world music, both of which may be more accessible to students of secondary age. Additionally, poor teaching of pop and world music, stemming from a lack of confidence on the part of the teacher, could ironically widen the gap between teacher and student yet further, leaving an even greater sense that the teacher does not understand 'their' (the students') music, even more so perhaps than if there had been no attempt to introduce it at all.

If there is to be a widening of musical experiences in the classroom, and a matching of the curriculum to students' external musical experiences, as explored in the Musical Futures Project, and if teachers are going to teach with confidence, then surely there needs to be the assurance that music undergraduates are given access to teaching of all different genres of music in their degree, as suggested by Younker (2002)? It should of course be

recognised that not all students undertake a music degree with the intention of becoming a music teacher, and it is not being suggested that University music degrees should be devised purely on this basis. Nevertheless, a music degree, for whatever purpose, should grant a subject knowledge able to equip a student with a wide enough skill base in a variety of aptitudes to at least enable a starting point for further study if required. Gammon (2003) writes on the diversity of subject knowledge of secondary PGCE music students in terms of the difficulty of assessing a candidate's suitability to teach, and criticises those courses which are too narrowly defined. Even the Benchmark Statement introduced by the Quality Assurance Agency in 2002, designed to lessen the impact of such diversity of courses and encourage a basic framework for the requirements of first degrees, was not enough to guarantee a core level of knowledge which teacher trainers could be confident that each applicant had achieved. Even those courses which were considered to be more receptive to newer styles of music education, particularly those which specialised in popular music, were discussed in cautionary terms by Gammon:

A number of 'popular music' courses I have looked at are less diverse and less inclusive than some older established courses which take Western art music as their central focus, so change is no guarantee of progress (Gammon, 2003: 95).

From Gammon's research and the findings of the Musical Futures Project, it seems that a carefully balanced approach is needed in equipping students with the necessary knowledge to teach music as a subject in the school curriculum, and that Universities should, at least in part, be responsible for providing a programme that enables a smooth transition to post graduate courses, whether those are in education or other areas of music. There will always be the need for specialist courses such as performance-based degrees within conservatoires for those who want to become performers and therefore need a heavy emphasis on instrumental learning; however, there should be, at the very least, a recognition that each

stage of musical learning and training is not distinctive from the next, and each is vital in ensuring a smooth transition up the educational ladder:

We argue here that, if we wish to develop new generations of relevant music teachers and leaders, the burden lies within all stages of education and training, and among all those working with young musicians (Price, 2006b: 2).

This philosophy supports the underlying premise of the current research, which is to acknowledge the chain of educational events, and the importance of seeing the wider implications. Recruiting higher numbers for GCSE music is not the be all and end all if there is no sense of wider purpose: what would be the point? It is important that research in this area recognises the continuing flow of educational experiences, or there is a danger that it will become static. The findings from such research should inform practice at every stage of the continuum to be the most effective and most meaningful. This way, theory can inform practice in the most useful and enlightening way.

It is for this reason that this study fully recognises the importance of the views of music students within further and higher education, and how these relate to those of the students within KS3.

Conclusion to the Literature Review

This review of the literature has attempted to synthesise the research available on issues central to this thesis. The relatively lower uptake of music GCSE compared to art and drama has been cited as a major concern to educationalists, possibly resulting in the removal of music from the statutory curriculum at KS3. In order to assess the potential impact of this measure, the justifications for music in the school curriculum have been explored, including an investigation into the extrinsic, extra-musical benefits of studying music in addition to the intrinsic reasons why the compulsory study of music might be beneficial. Part of this discussion was related to whether, on the basis of these justifications, a music education should be available for all or for some: should curriculum policy makers assess the

importance of a music education in terms of numbers taking examinations, such as the GCSE, or in terms of the accessibility to a musical education in school forming part of our cultural entitlement?

Attitudes towards music in the school curriculum were assessed from the perspectives of stakeholders including teachers, parents, and, of course, the children themselves, and in what ways these contribute towards the decision-making process at the end of KS3. The importance of music to adolescents outside of school, and their perceptions of how this relates to music in school, was a key element of this discussion.

Finally, the wider implications of lower numbers taking GCSE music were explored, including the knock-on effect higher up the educational chain, particularly with regards to the recruitment of secondary school music teachers and the future of Initial Teacher Training courses in music.

Conversely, the assumption that lower uptake rates is indicative of a problem was challenged; as long as everyone who wishes to take part in music post-KS3 is able to do so, and are not excluded due to financial or other reasons, then perhaps it is equally or more important that children in KS3 value and enjoy their music lessons than choose it for GCSE? Of course, it is unlikely that anyone would suggest that enjoyment of class music is not desirable, but maybe this should be seen as the highest priority rather than a pleasant side-effect; after all, this review has explored findings which suggest that enjoyment does not always correlate to higher uptake rates which leads again to the question of what a music education in school is really trying to achieve.

Perhaps it is due to the unique place that music holds in children's everyday lives that makes it less likely that those same children will continue to GCSE and beyond, as they have access to so much music outside of school, either in an active or passive capacity: perhaps, in terms of GCSE music uptake rates, music, as a favoured pastime, is a victim (GCSE uptake rates in school) of its own success (participation outside school), although this would not of course account for the wide variations in uptake between schools.

Maybe if children are taught to see that music in school post-KS3 might offer more than they will be able to gain outside school and that it does have value in the same way as other art subjects, then numbers at GCSE may improve, but this is not necessarily the be all and end all.

This thesis aims to explore the reasons why children are not opting to take GCSE music in the same numbers as art and drama and will consider the issues raised in this review by questioning students at KS3 and those in further, higher and tertiary music education.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Introduction

The methodology section of a research report is often regarded as its core; the means by which the validity and resulting quality of the research can be assessed (Crotty, 2005). The importance of solid methodological rigour, and the necessity to inform readers of the research of the methods employed, is an integral part of what is often considered 'good' research. Burnard (2006) writes at length on the desirability for researchers, with a particular emphasis on music education researchers in her article, to be candid and honest about the processes undertaken during the research process:

Music education is not filled with achievements in terms of what *methods* are used and what *methodology* governs choice and use of methods and what *theoretical perspective* lies behind the methodology in question, and what *epistemology* informs this theoretical perspective (p. 148).

Why is this clarity important? Burnard argues that without it, fellow researchers cannot really be sure of how well the research has been designed to answer the research questions, and that there is a danger that without the distinction between methodology and methods used, and what theoretical perspective informs the research, it is unlikely to make explicit its aims or fulfil its purposes. Justification and explanation of methods and methodology used not only has benefits for those reading and evaluating the research, but also for those wanting to build upon it:

The most basic implications for future research in music education are to clearly articulate the research questions that guide the enquiry... (music education research) would be enhanced if researchers explicitly mapped out their assumptions, including the 'what', 'how', and 'why' of methods and methodologies as distinct but interrelated dimensions. If this is done, other researchers can reference, extend, test, build and make links. Importantly, it is the clarity of justification, detailed explanation and description provided by the researcher which allows judgements of validity to be made by the reader (ibid.: 149).

This rather lengthy quotation is important, as it helps to emphasise the necessity of methodological honesty and transparency not only for its

own sake so that the research itself is valid, but also so that the research can be built upon in the future, providing a sense of purpose in the wider field of the literature and adding to existing knowledge.

The purposiveness of research in practice is also increasingly seen as an important measure of good research; that is, educational research should not only add to the wider literature, but should also provide a means of informing practice in an easy-to-access and informative way, and should not be regarded as unrelated to practitioners who should, ideally, be able to understand and utilise the findings (Westbury, 2002a; Brown, 2005; Reimer, 2006). In this way, methodological strength, although important, should be viewed in the context of the considered aims and objectives of the research. As Hostetler (2005) writes:

The question of what counts as good education research has received a great deal of attention, but too often it is conceived principally as a methodological question rather than an ethical one. Good education research is a matter not only of sound procedures but also of beneficial aims and results; our ultimate aim as researchers and educator's is to serve people's well being (p. 16).

This section of the thesis, then, will detail the methodological choices by justifying how they relate to the research questions and from what theoretical perspective the methodological decisions have originated, as recommended by Burnard (2006) and Crotty (2005).

The research process

Crotty (2005) highlights the need for all researchers to establish the research questions before designing the research:

Not too many of us embark on a piece of social research with epistemology as our starting point. 'I am a constructionist. Therefore I will investigate...' Hardly. We typically start with a real-life issue that needs to be addressed, a problem that needs to be solved, a question that needs to be answered. We plan our research in terms of that issue or problem or question (Crotty, 2005: 13).

It is quite often the case that some researchers prefer to work within a particular paradigm but it is highly desirable that the research itself is not compromised in order to fit more comfortably with the needs of the

researcher: the research design should meet the needs of the questions, not the researcher where at all possible. It is also acknowledged that the research process is not realistically linear; it is expected that it will sometimes be necessary to return to previous ideas presented in the literature review, for example, and adapt these in order to meet the needs of the research (Wellington, 2000).

Research Questions

The key research question is:

- What are the key factors which affect the uptake rate for GCSE music?

The following sub questions will also be explored:

- What is the correlation between participation in instrumental tuition and extra-curricular music in school and opting to take GCSE music?
- How much does musical activity outside school motivate students to continue with formal music education in school post-KS3?
- Do the students' perceptions (correct or incorrect) of what GCSE music entails have much of a bearing on their decision to opt for the subject in Year 9?
- How significant an issue is it that some schools recruit lower numbers than others, and what are the implications of this?

The theoretical basis of the research

The essence of children's experiences of school, of which making option choices at the end of Year 9 is just one, is made up of numerous influences and interactions between themselves as individuals and those with whom they come into contact. This continually evolving process of interaction, which includes peers, teachers and the institutional environment itself, is a complex amalgamation of experiences. When seeking to understand what makes people behave in certain ways, it is difficult to give definitive answers;

indeed, the students themselves may give answers to questions of which they are not entirely sure.

Certainly, it is possible to suggest trends in normal behaviour patterns and stages of development as is evident in the work of Piaget (1896-1980). It is also possible to hold a somewhat subjective stance on what it means to be a human, in that we all as individuals understand meaning in life relative to our own experiences. In this research, however, which is looking at the influences of the school environment on children's choices, as well as the impact of friends and family, it is difficult to establish with any certainty the factors affecting GCSE option choices: neither an objective nor subjective stance can be assumed. In this way, constructionism, a term mainly derived from the work of Karl Mannheim (1893-1947), seems to be a much more appropriate epistemological base on which to build this research. In this way, the research is recognising the unity of subject and object, the part they play in interaction and the 'intentionality' of existence (Crotty, 2005: 45). In other words, 'there is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered, but constructed' (ibid.: 9). In particular, social constructionism takes account of the role of culture in determining experiences and is particularly relevant with regards to exploring the effects of the school institution on young people, as schools often represent an intrinsic culture, part of, but nevertheless distinct from, the wider cultural influences on society.

In terms of the theoretical perspective underpinning the current research, it is most appropriately linked to pragmatism. Pragmatism, originating from the work of Charles Sanders Pierce (1839 – 1914), provides a grounding for social research based on the premise of using the findings from such research to inform stakeholders and organisations and, hopefully, improve practice and, as an example of how it might be used, can be seen underpinning much action research. Denzin and Lincoln write a helpful section on the nature of pragmatism, defining its aims and uses:

Pragmatism seeks first of all to link theory and praxis. The core reflection process is connected to action outcomes that involve manipulating material and social factors (in a

given context). Experience emerges in a continual interaction between people and their environment and, accordingly, this process constitutes both the subjects and the objects of enquiry. The actions taken are purposeful and aim at creating desired outcomes. Hence the knowledge-creation process is based on the inquirer's norms, values and interests (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 147).

The emphasis within the pragmatist philosophy, which can be read in the above words of Denzin and Lincoln and in the work of Dewey and James (cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 147), is on the interaction between subject and object and in this way can be seen to relate clearly to the constructionism epistemology. The importance of conducting applied research in order to reflect upon and explore 'real-life problem situations' (ibid.: 148) is wholly relevant to the current research; pupils' perceptions of their school music experiences and how this impacts upon their option choices at Year 9 will be disseminated with a view to informing stakeholders and linking theory to practice in a critical and informative way. At the same time, it is recognised that the researcher brings 'norms, values and interests' (ibid.: 147) which will possibly influence the organisation and interpretation of data. An awareness of such possibilities and limitations will be maintained and communicated as will an acceptance that this research is and perhaps cannot be conducted from a purely objective perspective, such as is the nature of much social research. In particular, it is acknowledged that there are potentially many influential factors affecting GCSE uptake rates, and that there is a complicated inter-weaving of personal, social and educational issues; this research will attempt to disentangle these where appropriate, but will bear in mind the interrelated nature of them at the same time.

This research, therefore, based on the nature of what it is to be explored, is rooted in a constructionist epistemology and is informed by the theoretical perspective of pragmatism.

Bearing this in mind, it is necessary to make explicit the choice of methodology and methods. It must be noted at this point, however, that the epistemological and theoretical basis for the research does not dictate the methodology and methods chosen; the research questions, and the need to answer these using the most appropriate method is of ultimate importance,

not being caught within a justification trap between epistemology and research methods. As Johnson and Onwuegbuzie write:

There is rarely entailment from epistemology to methodology. For example, differences in epistemological beliefs (such as a difference in beliefs about the appropriate logic of justification) should not prevent a qualitative researcher from utilizing data collection methods more typically associated with quantitative research, and vice versa (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 15).

That is not to say, on the other hand, that the epistemological basis of the research cannot influence its design, analysis and evaluation. That is, the researcher using a questionnaire designed with quantitative analysis in mind could be mindful of the ways in which, although analysed quantitatively, the wording of the questions themselves might be interpreted differently by the participants and affect the results of the questionnaire; language and its meaning to individuals is another element of the constructionist perspective and is important to recognise as being potentially influential in this study (Crotty, 2005).

The research design

Methodology and Methods

Within music education, there is an interaction between people, music and the institution itself. Reimer (2006) highlights the difficulties facing music education researchers when trying to cater for these three aspects when designing research:

Because music education deals with the interactions of music, people, and education, each of them existing at three general levels of reality, research attempting to understand and enhance those interrelations must be diverse and co-ordinated. No single approach to research can possibly cope with all levels, and no scattershot array of studies can possibly yield understandings of the organic nature of the interactions music education must influence (Reimer, 2006: 10).

Thus we return to the idea that each piece of research must cater for its own individual needs: the concept that there is a fixed set of rules governing the field of social research, and in particular music education research, is unwise to assume. Nevertheless, it is arguably advantageous, particularly to a novice researcher, to utilise methodologies and methods that have been

well practised whilst at the same time retaining some sense of autonomy over their usage.

One of the aims of the research is to discover, on a relatively large scale, the opinions and perceptions of students; one of the recognised methods of finding out opinion on a large scale is via the use of questionnaires which can be useful in gaining an 'at a glance' overview of responses to more closed-ended questions. For example, one of the key questions to be asked to the KS3 participants in the study is 'are you going to take GCSE music?' There are only a limited number of answers possible to this question in the initial stages of inquiry, including 'yes', 'no' and 'not sure'. When dealing with closed questions such as this on a large scale, the use of quantitative methods of analysis in order to deduce statistical inferences are beneficial to the answering of the research question (Asmus and Radocy, 2006). Indeed, 'a significant body of knowledge about musical phenomena has arisen through the use of quantitative methods' (ibid.: 96). However, such closed-ended questions may not be enough to gain an accurate portrayal of the true thought and feeling associated with musical learning and development. As Asmus and Radocy (2006) write:

Quantification has met considerable resistance in music education. The general outlook is that music is so complex and deals with aesthetic elements that are so far beyond tangible matters that it is impossible to quantify musical behaviours, objects or events (p.96).

Here we have two opposing views presented, and it is perhaps difficult to argue against either; quantitative methods have been utilised effectively within music education research (Yarbrough, 2003), yet the complexity and subjective element of music as a subject possibly makes it undesirable to wholly quantify any research into music or music education. How might researchers counteract such a dichotomy of research needs? If we return to the previous question of 'are you going to take GCSE music?' it might well be appropriate and practical to statistically analyse this question and closed-ended questions like it, using quantitative methods. Yet to leave the question there would not be to discover any meaning behind *why* the

question was answered the way it was. By allowing the opportunity for the individual to give a more open response by asking a further question such as 'what is the reason you gave for your answer?', there is more scope for a deeper, more qualitative evaluation: the subjectivity of what it is to experience music is being permitted into the research. Returning to the concept of language and meaning, this is particularly important. To simply ask 'do you enjoy class music lessons?', for example, might provoke different interpretations by different individuals and so it is necessary to elicit further opinion by asking 'why do you enjoy class music lessons?' and allowing a more open-ended response. As Cohen *et al.* (2000) write:

It is the open-ended response that might contain the 'gems' of information that otherwise might not have been caught in the questionnaire. Further, it puts the responsibility of the data much more firmly into the respondents' hands (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000: 255).

What must be borne in mind at this point, however, is that care is taken not to deem open-ended questions within a questionnaire as automatically constituting a qualitative method: Bryman (2006) maintains that it is the way that such data are treated (that is, the use of a quantitative or qualitative method of analysis) which is important in distinguishing questions such as these as indicating a qualitative approach. In response to an evaluation of research which combined quantitative and qualitative methods, he writes:

...the researcher claimed to have used a qualitative approach or to be using qualitative data, but in fact the 'qualitative data' were based on a quantitative analysis of unstructured data – for example, of responses to open-ended questions...it is very debatable whether they can be regarded as indicative of a qualitative approach (Bryman, 2006: 100).

For this reason, the approach taken in analysing the open-ended sections of the questionnaires will be made explicit so as not to cause any confusion over whether or not this was approached in a qualitative or quantitative way; what is most important, however, is that students are given the opportunity for a greater means of expression within the

questionnaires through the use of open-ended questions, however these will be analysed.

The use of the interview, either individual or group, can also provide a means of discovering more in-depth, qualitative material that might inform the questionnaire data or indeed inform the questionnaire design, depending on its purpose (Bryman, 2001). In this research, a focus group interview has been decided as the most appropriate form of interview, in that the 'interaction of its members can add to the depth or insight of either an interview or a survey' (Rowntree, 2004: 124-125). A focus group interview has advantages; the tight focus of the interview on a particular topic, and the group's interaction with each other, leads the direction of the interview under the guidance of the interviewer. The inclusion of well-placed and appropriate questions planned to meet the objectives of the research (Bryman, 2001) is also part of the process.

Also inherent in the purpose of the focus group method is that the group members share a common experience related to the research and will thus be able to discuss the topic with each other. In this research, it is believed that a focus group of Year 10 students, those who are in their first year of their GCSE music course and have therefore been through the option-taking process, will be able to add insight as to why students do or do not choose GCSE music based on their own experiences of why they did and why other students might not.

The approach of mixing methods, in this research by combining questionnaires with a focus group interview, is deemed by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) to be the third paradigm within educational research, encompassing the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods and enabling the greatest chance of answering the research questions in some instances. In terms of this research, it appears that a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods may well be the most effectual way of gaining the answers to the questions. On a cautionary note, however, Bryman (1992) urges against using mixed methods as a cosmetic tool, used

automatically to make the research appear superior simply from the fact it has used mixed methods. He states that 'the researcher has to judge whether any important aspects of the research problem would be ignored if there was an exclusive reliance on one research approach' (p.69). It could be argued that the current research would be compromised without the statistical analysis available to quantify the closed-ended questions on a large scale, but also without the ability to glean a more subjective, qualitative response from participants, especially and most particularly given the creative and personal nature of the experience of music.

Additionally, the use of methodological triangulation in educational research is regarded as useful, as 'the more the methods contrast with each other, the greater the researcher's confidence' (Cohen *et al.* 2000: 112). Triangulation between methods, as will be employed in this study, 'embraces the notion of convergence between independent measures of the same objective' (ibid.: 114). Silverman (1985) believes triangulation to be essentially positivistic in nature, yet Bartlett *et al.* (2001) argue the case that both paradigms may find triangulation useful to increase the validity of their research, but will use it in different ways.

In this way, a mixed methodology is seen as the most useful and appropriate methodology for this research; questionnaires comprising closed and open-ended questions and a focus group interview will be the methods used.

Sample

The sample comprised four different groups of participants, defined by the stage the participants were currently at within their music education and the method to be employed. Three sample groups (Groups 1-3) were questionnaire respondents, and the remaining group (Group 4) formed the Music Focus Group. Group 1 comprised those students in KS3 who are yet to take their options. Group 2 comprised KS4 and A-Level students (recent option-takers); Group 3 comprised BMus and PGCE secondary music

students (those who have chosen to study music within higher education or train to teach music at secondary level). It was decided to separate the questionnaire respondents in this way in order to deal with the slightly different focus on each. For example, KS3 students were required to think carefully about their experiences of class music lessons and why they may or may not take GCSE music in the future; KS4 and A-level students were asked to explore why they had recently opted to take GCSE music; the BMus and PGCE students were asked to look back retrospectively at their experiences and answer more open-ended questions on the research problem - this is so that their expected greater experience of being involved in music education could be explored more fully, and recognised the educational chain of events. Group 4 comprised one group of six year 10 students who were given the opportunity to focus on why they had opted to take GCSE music, the data from which triangulated with the questionnaire data.

Cohen *et al.* (2000) write on the importance of careful sampling:

The quality of a piece of research not only stands or fails by the appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation but also by the suitability of the sampling strategy that has been adopted (Cohen, Manion and Mason, 2000: 92).

In deciding the best approach to take when dealing with sampling issues, Cohen *et al.* (2000) outline four key factors: the size of the sample; the representative and parameters of the sample; access to the sample and the sampling strategy to be used (p. 92). These will now be discussed in relation to the current research, but not necessarily in the listed order.

The participants for Groups 1 and 2 were taken from a selection of nine secondary schools and one Sixth Form College within the North East of England. The schools were selected in order to represent a cross section of school types and catchment areas, illustrating the use of a stratified sampling strategy. The table below details information pertaining to the selected schools, including data regarding pupils' eligibility for free school meals in relation to the national average. In this research, level of free school meal eligibility is taken to be an indicator of socio-economic background within

the catchment area of the school. The information has been gathered from the most recent Ofsted inspection reports and the schools' own data:

School	Gender	Age range	No. of pupils on roll	Description	Religious character	Free school meal eligibility
A	Mixed	11-16	867	Secondary	Non-denominational	Above average
B	Mixed	11-18	1445	Secondary	Non-denominational	Well below average
C	Co-educational	11-18	430	Independent	Non-denominational	N/A
D	Mixed	11-16	1285	Secondary	Non-denominational	Above average
E	Mixed	11-16	904	Secondary	Non-denominational	Well over twice the national average and rising
F	Mixed	11-18	1586	Secondary	Roman Catholic	Well below average
G	Mixed	11-16	721	Secondary	Non-denominational	Above average
H	Mixed	11-18	791	Secondary	Non-denominational	Broadly average
I	Mixed	11-18	1089	Secondary	Non-denominational	Average
J	Mixed	16-18	550	Further Education College	Roman Catholic	Data unavailable

Table 1: Profile of schools selected.

Selecting schools in this way was intended to minimise the risk of sampling error and maximise the representativeness of the overall sample. In terms of answering the main research question, which is why students at KS3 choose to take GCSE music, this method of sampling the population was perceived to be the most appropriate strategy to adopt, and allowed the opportunity to generalise. Access to the sample was also important in school selection; schools in which music staff were known to the researcher were selected with the opinion that there was likely to be a higher response rate

from those schools who had personal awareness of the researcher and the institution from which the questionnaires had been sent.

In terms of the sample size, the majority of questionnaire respondents (Group 1) were KS3 students, and it was hoped that approximately 900 students from nine different schools would complete questionnaires (100 per school based on the assumption that one class from Y7, Y8 and Y9 of 30-35 children per class, this in itself denoting a simple random sample within the schools). It is thought that this number of sample provides an optimal chance of precision within the results:

It is clearly being suggested that the larger the sample size the greater the precision...by and large up to a sample size of 1000, the gains in precision are noticeable as the sample size climbs...after a certain point, often in the region of 1000, the sharp increases in precision become less pronounced (Bryman, 2001: 95).

The sample size of Group 2 was dependent upon how many students from the selected institutions were taking GCSE or A-level music. Exam class numbers were acquired from schools before sending out questionnaires which comprised about 400 KS4 students and 100 A-level students across the different institutions. This sampling strategy was indicative of a simple random sample within the stratified sampling of the school selection.

The response rate from Groups 1 and 2 was very high; of the nine secondary schools and one Sixth Form College to which questionnaires were sent, only one of the schools did not respond following three reminder letters, the recommended procedure following a lack of response (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). Another school, similar in terms of catchment area and school type to the non-respondent school, agreed to complete a batch of questionnaires in its place. The total number of questionnaires completed by KS3 students from the 900 sent out to schools was 679 (75%). The total number of KS4 and A-Level questionnaires completed from the 500 sent out was 275 (55%).

The participants for Group 3 comprised students from the Durham PGCE music secondary course and music students from both The Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London (GSMD) and the Royal College of Music in London (RCM). This sample was selected partly in terms of the

participants' perceived extra experience within music education and their ability to offer candid opinions on music education in schools based on their own experiences; and partly on the ease of access to the researcher to the students within this group, denoting a convenience sampling strategy. The sample size comprised of 52 from the 80 sent or given out (65%). It should also be noted that this group represented a convenience sample; the data from this was intended more to triangulate with the other groups and not to be seen to represent all PGCE or BMus students across the country.

Group 4 comprised one group of approximately six Year 10 students, three male and three female, from one of the schools selected for questionnaire distribution, and used a purposive sampling strategy: the school was selected due to its proximity to the researcher and the ease of access and helpfulness of the staff, and this can be a challenge facing social researchers, either in interviewing or observation (Woods, 1986). Bryman (2001) suggests that just one focus group is unlikely to fully meet the needs of the researcher, but on the other hand too many groups will yield vast amounts of data and not necessarily prove more productive than fewer groups. In the case of this research, it was felt that one focus group should produce sufficient data and did indeed produce ample data for analysis; if not, there would have been the opportunity and the willingness on the part of the researcher to have conducted more focus group interviews. It must also be highlighted at this stage that the students were selected by the school not the researcher. It was decided that this was advantageous in terms of access, but the students selected may unwittingly have been those who felt particularly favourably towards music in the school and may thus give a non-representative perspective. However, given the nature of this type of qualitative method, and that the data is not intended to generalise, rather offer insightful discussion, the overall decision was that it was acceptable for the students to be selected in this way.

Instrumentation and piloting of questionnaires

The questionnaires used in this research were adapted from questionnaires designed by Mills (2005a) and Wright (2002). The concept of using others' ideas in designing research is often regarded as advantageous. For example, Crotty (2003) maintains that the research process should be one which is tailored to meet the needs of the research, yet 'a study of how other people have gone about the task of human inquiry serves us well and is surely indispensable' (p.14).

Groups 1-3, as detailed in the previous section, were given a different questionnaire per group (Appendix A); not only did this differentiate between the type of information to be explored, but the questionnaires were also designed to suit the age of the participants. For example, the first section of the KS3 questionnaire, which was distributed to the youngest respondents, was designed with simple value statements and a limited choice of responses on the corresponding rating scale, in the hope of minimising any confusion over choices which might arise from using an alternative 5 or 7-point scale, most typical of the widely-used Likert scale. Cohen *et al.* (2000) write on the importance of acknowledging such factors:

Consider the readability levels of the questionnaire and the reading and writing abilities of the respondents (p.261).

For this reason, the language of the remaining questionnaires was more suitable for the higher age group of the participants, and a 7-point scale was utilised to enable more choice for the participants, who were thought more able to cope with greater options.

Each questionnaire contained a mix of closed and open-ended questions as previously discussed; it was intended that the qualitative nature of the open-ended questions would further understanding of the quantitative data retrieved from the closed-ended questions, a method often employed by psychological and sociological researchers (Fine *et al.*, 2003). The order of the questions was also important, as was the layout and presentation. It has been suggested that more sensitive questions should come later in the questionnaire and that 'a balance of questions which ask for

facts and opinions' (Cohen *et al.*, 2000: 261) should be achieved where possible.

Also considered important in the process is piloting the questionnaires, to check for ease of completion, length of time needed to complete the questionnaire and in the consideration of validity issues, that is, that the questionnaire is going to achieve what it set out to in terms of answering the research questions; to identify any potentially ambiguous questions and explore alternatives if necessary (Oppenheim, 1992). It is also considered beneficial to seek similar participants for the pilot questionnaires as will complete the finalised document in order to gain as accurate reflection as possible as to the potential interpretation of the questionnaire (Cohen *et al.*, 2000).

In this research, the pilot questionnaires for KS3 and KS4 and A-level (two participants for each questionnaire) were distributed to similar participants of the intended age and educational situation: the piloted questionnaires were completed and feedback given to the researcher. The participants felt that the questionnaires were easy to understand and unambiguous, but suggested an additional question for the KS3 questionnaire involving instrumental lessons. They highlighted the fact that although they were learning to play an instrument (Q1, KS3), this did not necessarily mean that they were receiving formal tuition, and did not know whether or not to include instruments that they were teaching themselves. This provided very useful feedback, as the correlation between those receiving instrumental tuition and those wanting to take GCSE music might be significant; that is, a high correlation between these factors could lend support for maintaining or increasing instrumental provision in schools. Simply stating whether or not the individual was learning to play an instrument would have assumed too much about the nature of the tuition, and would not have made any claims possible regarding formal instrumental tuition.

The BMus and PGCE questionnaire was also piloted by one student who was positive about its layout and content and had no further suggestions. However, it was felt that it might be useful to gain some further insight into this questionnaire and the researcher sent a copy to two researchers who were actively involved in music education research involving the two groups; their feedback and suggestions were largely concerned with layout and order, and was again very valuable. The revised layout and sequence of questions enabled participants to indicate their history of music education in the initial stages of the questionnaire, and direct them to the most applicable questions much sooner than the previous design had allowed (particularly relevant to those whose schools had not offered GCSE music, those who did not take GCSE music or those for whom GCSE music was a compulsory subject); this change certainly allowed an easier journey through the questionnaire, and was thus more likely to result in participants having the patience to continue, rather than becoming frustrated with a confusing layout and subsequently giving up, resulting in incomplete questionnaires (Oppenheim, 1992).

Ethical considerations

On completion of the research design, permission to undertake the research was obtained from Durham University's Ethics Committee. The anonymity of the nine secondary schools and one Sixth Form College used was protected, as was that of all individuals who participated in the research. All responses were treated confidentially and participants were made aware that they were able to withdraw from the research at any time and that the decision to do so would not adversely affect them in any way.

Participants in the Focus Group interview were informed that the interview would be recorded and that the transcriptions would remain confidential and the tape destroyed on completion of the research. The participants were also assured that their anonymity would be protected throughout the research. The group was made aware that they were free to

withdraw at any time. Such issues must be addressed and all possible ethical dilemmas explored in order to protect the welfare of the research participants (Cohen *et al.*, 2000).

Both questionnaire respondents and Music Focus Group participants were informed of the purposes of the research and consent to participate in the research was obtained, as is the responsibility of the researcher (Wellington, 2000). In the case of the schoolchildren participants, consent was obtained from the Head of Music on the children's behalf; the adult participants gave their informed consent individually.

In terms of the openness and honesty between the researcher and the participants, considered an important aspect of the researcher's ethical responsibility, the Heads of Music within the schools were made aware of the sensitive nature of one aspect of the questionnaire within the covering letter before signing consent, even though they were assured of anonymity of the results of the questionnaire. The question 'do you enjoy class music lessons'? and, more specifically, the corresponding open-ended question relating to what they might not enjoy about their music lessons in school, was made explicit; the responses from these questions may elicit unfavourable comments about the Department and its members and it was felt necessary that this was highlighted at an early stage, even though the staff were sent a copy of the questionnaire to view and could have located this information themselves. Wellington (2000) writes on the researcher's role and responsibility with regards to ethical concerns and states that 'perhaps the overriding rule is that honesty and openness should prevail' (p.56), and the researcher was keen to promote this at the initial stages of correspondence.

Procedure

Following the piloting of the questionnaires and the subsequent amendments, the questionnaires were compiled. For practical reasons, it was not possible for the researcher to distribute questionnaires in person, and so

all but one set of questionnaires (the PGCE participants) were posted to the necessary places; in this situation, in which the researcher is not going to be present to explain the necessary procedure, clear instructions are particularly important (Bryman, 2001). All schools to which questionnaires were sent therefore received a consent form and a covering letter briefly explaining the outline of the research and the procedure that they were required to follow (covering letters in Appendix B). One of the requirements was that the questionnaire participants should not discuss the questions when completing them in order that their answers should be their own, and not influenced by any other party. On completion of the questionnaires, the individual responsible for their return (Heads of Music for schoolchildren participants and one representative from the RCM and the GSMD respectively) was asked to post the questionnaires back to the researcher at the researcher's expense. The PGCE students' questionnaires were distributed and collected in person by the researcher.

The participants for the Music Focus Group were selected by the participating school's Head of Music, who observed the researcher's request for a gender balance. The Head of Music wrote to the students prior to the meeting explaining the rationale for the research and the ethical issues associated with anonymity. 45 minutes was allowed for the meeting. Before the participants arrived in the designated room, which was quiet and away from any potential distractions, the researcher set up the room; six chairs were placed in a row on one side of the table, with the portable audiocassette recorder in the middle and the researcher's chair positioned on the opposite side of the table to the participants. This set-up allowed everyone to be heard easily by the recording equipment and permitted easy eye contact between the participants themselves and between the participants and the researcher. Before the interview began, the participants were asked to speak one at a time and to try and give the opportunity for all six to answer the questions. They were told that, although the researcher had prepared some questions already (Appendix C), the nature of the Focus Group was to try and explore

issues raised within the session and that this would be encouraged to a degree through the use of a semi-structured interview.

Following completion of the interview, a full transcript was made which was only accessible to the researcher and her supervisor (Appendix D). A plan was also made of the room layout to help the researcher identify the speakers on tape when transcribing the interview.

The Music Focus Group took place after the distribution of the questionnaires, and on reflection it was felt that it might have been more beneficial to the research to have conducted such an interview before designing the questionnaires; although the Focus Group cannot provide any generalisable data as the sample is too small, inferences arose during the interview which may have been worth following up in the questionnaire data. All of the participants in the Focus Group, for example, mentioned that primary school, and in particular the commencement of formal instrumental tuition at this time, had been a key area of musical development for them and attributed this in part to their continued interest through to secondary school and, ultimately, to take GCSE music. Although the KS3 questionnaire referred to primary school music in one question, the researcher felt that, as all of the Focus Group participants had begun their instrumental tuition in their primary school years and placed such importance on this, the timing of *when* instrumental lessons are started may have a bearing on option choices; reference to this and to their general attitude to primary school music within the KS4 and A-level questionnaire may have yielded some interesting results. Such a consideration had not occurred to the researcher before this interview, and by the time it had taken place, the questionnaires had been distributed. Although the realisation that this task might have been better timed is frustrating on one level, this type of self-reflection is important in becoming a reflective practitioner; being able to disclose elements of practice that could be improved through the medium of a learning journal, as was the case in this instance, can be an empowering experience and can 'serve technical,

instrumental, and professional purposes as well as personal and academic purposes' (Morrison, 1996: 328).

Validity and Reliability

There is a great deal of material on the issues of validity and reliability in research. How these relate to the present research will be discussed briefly now.

Cohen *et al.* (2000) provide a detailed and useful overview of the issues relating to both validity and reliability. They maintain that there is no such thing as 100% validity in a piece of research; rather, that it is more a case of a researcher attempting to minimise invalidity and maximise validity. In order to ensure validity of the research at the design stage, Cohen *et al.* maintain that an appropriate methodology should be selected which meets the needs of the research questions (mixed methodology in the present research); appropriate instrumentation and sampling should be employed; and that other aspects of validity such as internal, external and content validity should also be addressed.

In the current research, with regards to the questionnaire participants, every attempt was made to ensure that the sample was carefully selected as already discussed, and the instrumentation carefully designed to meet the needs of the research questions; limitations within the design relating to language and understanding of the questions and assumptions on the part of the researcher were made known in order to lend transparency to the research process. With regards to the Focus Group interview, validity might be achieved by minimising researcher bias; including misunderstandings of the meanings of the participants where possible and the risk of injecting personal opinions into the interview process. By being mindful of such risks and making them clear, the researcher enables those reading the research to form more accurate judgements as to the extent of its validity.

In the current research, on listening to the focus group interview transcript (Appendix D), it was noticed that some questions asked by the researcher

were rather lengthy, and thus may have lacked clarity, and in some instances more than one question was asked at the same time. Additionally, there were occasions when leading questions were asked which may have made suggestions as to how the students should answer the question. Overall, however, the questions were conveyed with adequate clarity and objectivity.

Reliability of the research refers to the extent to which elements of the research is consistent and can be replicated 'over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents' (ibid.: 117) and is concerned with accuracy and precision. In the current research, reliability has not been tested across different groups. It is hoped, however, that the sample number for KS3 will allow for a greater precision and subsequent ability to generalise the findings. For the other questionnaire respondents, reliability has also not been tested, and the results from this are not intended to be generalised, more to triangulate with the other data which can be regarded as providing concurrent validity to the research. The issue of reliability regarding the Music Focus Group is not as applicable due to the sample size. It could be argued, however, that there is some merit in striving for replication in refining and constructing constructs within qualitative research, and the quantitative approach to reliability can have its place in qualitative research when appropriate (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

Data Analysis

Questionnaire Analysis

On receipt of the questionnaires, each questionnaire type (KS3, KS4 and A-level and BMus and PGCE) was edited to check for completeness, accuracy and uniformity (ibid.: 265). Following editing, the responses to the precoded, closed-ended questions were computer analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to discover relationships between variables. Descriptive and frequency statistics were used to indicate trends, and the correlation coefficient between variables calculated using a

non-parametric test (Spearman's) to ascertain the probability of the relationship between variables occurring by chance.

In terms of the open-ended responses within the questionnaires, the constant comparison method (Wellington, 2000) was used, based on the ideas of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Glaser and Strauss (1967). This method was utilised in order to decipher emergent codes within the data, (Bryman, 2001; Ryan and Bernard, 2003) and to discover relationships and patterns from the process of continuous refinement; the coding involved in analysing qualitative data is in a continual state of change and revision as constant comparisons are made and linked to theory, until the point of 'theoretical saturation' (Bryman, 2001: 391). Also important to remember is the element of researcher input to the process, and that the ultimate selection of categories rests with personal choice. As Wellington (2000) states:

...the 'emergence' of categories from data depends entirely on the researcher. This is part of the 'research act' (Denzin, 1970). In educational research, as in the physical sciences, theories do not come from observations or experiences; they come from people (ibid.: 142).

Focus Group Analysis

It is acknowledged that due to the interactive nature of the focus group, the data retrieved can be difficult to analyse (ibid.: 349). Issues such as accurately transcribing a group interview and coding to explore concepts and categories can be timely and difficult to achieve without compromising the holistic meaning of the interview (Cohen *et al.*, 2000: 282). There are several ways of analysing interview data. One way is to employ the constant comparison method as discussed in the above section to decipher possible emergent codes and categorise the data. A similar method is that suggested by Miles and Huberman (1984) who 'suggest twelve tactics for generating meaning from transcribed and interview data (Cohen *et al.*, 2000: 283). The tactics include: 'counting frequencies of occurrence; noting patterns and themes; clustering; making metaphors; factoring; finding intervening variables and making conceptual/theoretical coherence' (ibid.: 283). In this

research, the constant comparison method (Wellington, 2000) was used, as in the qualitative data analysis of the questionnaires.

This chapter has sought to communicate the methodology and methods employed within the current research clearly and accurately. The limitations and thought processes behind the research design have been outlined in order to portray the progression of ideas and the justification for these. The research has been designed according to how the research questions may best be answered, whilst acknowledging the wider field and utilising previously used methods from this.

The next chapter will analyse the data collected within and between sample groups.

Chapter 3: Analysis of Results

Introduction

This chapter will present the data and lead the reader through the results; how these were obtained and why and how the data were analysed.

It must be remembered at this point that the three groups of questionnaire participants (KS3, KS4 and BMus and PGCE) and the focus group all had a slightly different purpose in the research. The KS3 data comprises the largest sample (N=679) and the intention is to be able to generalise from the findings in order to answer the research questions. The KS4 and A-Level (N=275), and BMus and PGCE (N=52) questionnaires comprise smaller samples of students and are intended to yield results which might triangulate with the KS3 data and assist in understanding the findings from KS3. The focus group is also intended to raise issues that might challenge or support the findings from the KS3 data and perhaps add a different dimension for discussion, recognising that there can be no generalisations made from such data.

Acknowledging the varying purposes of the different sample groups, this chapter will address each group in turn, focusing on the quantitative data followed by the qualitative data, with the exception of the focus group which be analysed only qualitatively. Following the analysis of each group's data, there will then follow a section which synthesises the results from all groups and observes trends across the findings.

Key Stage 3 Results

Quantitative Data: All Schools

The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were analysed quantitatively using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program. Questions were re-coded to enable the program to correlate the results using the Spearman's non-parametric correlation coefficient test in order to

decipher the relationship between two variables. The computer program detailed the relationship in terms of the direction of the correlation, positive or negative, and also the strength of the correlation, that is, the extent to which the correlation was statistically significant.

When analysing data, decisions have to be made regarding which data might be focused on: not all questionnaire responses need necessarily be analysed and presented, depending on the emerging significance of other aspects of the questionnaire. For example, if the correlation between wanting to take GCSE music and taking part in extra-curricular music was found to be not statistically significant, it may not be necessary to then analyse the musical groups of which students are a part. The analysis of data is a process, during which decisions are made relating to the emerging data.

In terms of the closed-ended questions on the KS3 questionnaire, the main question in terms of the research was 'Are you going to take GCSE music?', the responses to which provided one variable. The other questions provided the second variable with which to compare this. In this way, it was hoped that a clearer picture may begin to emerge as to the factors which influence the decision whether or not to take GCSE music. The question of why this might be was hoped to be apparent in the answers to the more open-ended questions. For now, it is necessary to look at the initial findings from the quantitative data.

Nine schools participated in the research for KS3. The between schools findings are worthy of attention, but to begin with the results will be looked at across all schools.

The first questions to be analysed were the value statements within question 5 relating to children's thoughts on their musical lives in and out of school. Comparing these statements with the responses to the question 'Are you going to take GCSE music?' provided some statistically significant results. The following tables show the percentages of students who

answered 'yes', no' and 'not sure' to the two variables shown. All the tables have the relative level of significance and strength of correlation underneath:

Take GCSE Music * Enjoy class music lessons Crosstabulation

			Q5A			
			No	Not sure	Yes	Total
Take GCSE Music	No	Count	109	89	151	349
		% of Total	16.3%	13.3%	22.6%	52.2%
	Not sure	Count	14	47	150	211
		% of Total	2.1%	7.0%	22.4%	31.5%
	Yes	Count	5	11	93	109
		% of Total	.7%	1.6%	13.9%	16.3%
Total	Count	128	147	394	669	
	% of Total	19.1%	22.0%	58.9%	100.0%	

P<0.01 Correlation .368

The table above details the key percentages associated with the participants' responses to the two variables 'I enjoy class music lessons' and 'I am going to take GCSE music'. What should also be noted is that the total number of students who responded to the statement 'I am going to take GCSE music' can be seen to vary across all the tables (in italics in the vertical 'Total' column in the table above). This is due to the computer only including those responses for which students gave a response to both variables. For those statements for which students did not respond, the computer has considered this a non-response and these have therefore not been counted. The percentages in bold type indicate the difference between those who said that they do want to take GCSE music ('Yes') and their corresponding responses to the question 'I enjoy class music lessons?' ('Yes', 'No' or 'Not sure'). It can be seen that 0.7% **of those who said that they did want to take GCSE music** also said that, no, they did not enjoy class music lessons, 1.6% said that they were not sure if they enjoyed class music lessons, and 13.9% responded that they did enjoy class music lesson (that is, a statistically significant percentage of students who said that were going to take GCSE music also reported saying that, yes, they enjoyed class music lessons p<0.01). This formulation is the same for the following six tables (although it should be pointed out that the axis are reversed for the sixth table, with 'take

GCSE music' comprising the horizontal, and 'want to do music for a job' comprising the vertical).

Take GCSE Music * I am in a band Crosstabulation

			I am in a band			
			No	Not sure	Yes	Total
Take GCSE Music	No	Count	330	4	13	347
		% of Total	49.3%	.6%	1.9%	51.9%
	Not sure	Count	181	7	25	213
		% of Total	27.1%	1.0%	3.7%	31.8%
	Yes	Count	68	3	38	109
		% of Total	10.2%	.4%	5.7%	16.3%
Total	Count	579	14	76	669	
	% of Total	86.5%	2.1%	11.4%	100.0%	

P<0.01 Correlation .316

Take GCSE Music * Music is an important part of my life Crosstabulation

			Music is an important part of my life			Total
			No	Not sure	Yes	
Take GCSE Music	No	Count	156	73	119	348
		% of Total	23.3%	10.9%	17.8%	51.9%
	Not sure	Count	54	79	81	214
		% of Total	8.1%	11.8%	12.1%	31.9%
	Yes	Count	11	14	83	108
		% of Total	1.6%	2.1%	12.4%	16.1%
Total	Count	221	166	283	670	
	% of Total	33.0%	24.8%	42.2%	100.0%	

P<0.01 Correlation .288

Take GCSE Music * Class music lessons are important Crosstabulation

			Class music lessons are important			
			No	Not sure	Yes	Total
Take GCSE Music	No	Count	163	113	73	349
		% of Total	24.2%	16.8%	10.8%	51.9%
	Not sure	Count	25	88	102	215
		% of Total	3.7%	13.1%	15.2%	31.9%
	Yes	Count	9	21	79	109
		% of Total	1.3%	3.1%	11.7%	16.2%
Total	Count	197	222	254	673	
	% of Total	29.3%	33.0%	37.7%	100.0%	

P<0.01 Correlation .451

Take GCSE Music *I enjoy making up music Crosstabulation

			I enjoy making up music			Total
			No	Not sure	Yes	
Take GCSE Music	No	Count	151	56	143	350
		% of Total	22.4%	8.3%	21.2%	52.0%
	Not sure	Count	38	39	137	214
		% of Total	5.6%	5.8%	20.4%	31.8%
	Yes	Count	8	8	93	109
		% of Total	1.2%	1.2%	13.8%	16.2%
Total	Count	197	103	373	673	
	% of Total	29.3%	15.3%	55.4%	100.0%	

P<0.01 Correlation .354

Take GCSE Music *I enjoy performing music Crosstabulation

			I enjoy performing music			
			No	Not sure	Yes	Total
Take GCSE Music	No	Count	201	47	102	350
		% of Total	30.0%	7.0%	15.2%	52.2%
	Not sure	Count	68	52	92	212
		% of Total	10.1%	7.7%	13.7%	31.6%
	Yes	Count	15	10	84	109
		% of Total	2.2%	1.5%	12.5%	16.2%
Total	Count	284	109	278	671	
	% of Total	42.3%	16.2%	41.4%	100.0%	

P<0.01 Correlation .354

Take GCSE Music * Would like to do music for a job Crosstabulation

			Take GCSE Music			
			No	Not sure	Yes	Total
Would like to do music for a job	No	Count	305	74	26	405
		% of Total	45.2%	11.0%	3.9%	60.0%
	Not sure	Count	33	125	36	194
		% of Total	4.9%	18.5%	5.3%	28.7%
	Yes	Count	13	16	47	76
		% of Total	1.9%	2.4%	7.0%	11.3%
Total	Count	351	215	109	675	
	% of Total	52.0%	31.9%	16.1%	100.0%	

P<0.01 Correlation .577

Most of the above correlations demonstrating statistical significance are in some ways unsurprising, yet certainly worthy of note; the results show that students who show an interest in opting for GCSE music whilst in KS3 do demonstrate more positive attitudes towards class music in terms of value and enjoyment than those who are not sure or do not currently think they will take GCSE. Enjoyment of and/or participation in practical

musicianship (although the questions in this section did not specify whether this was in or out of school) is also more likely to be reported by those who wish to take music beyond KS3. This is in line with much of the literature, and will be discussed more fully later in the thesis. A somewhat surprising result was the strength of correlation between the variables 'I would like to do music for a job' and 'I am going to take GCSE music' which had the strongest correlation of any other variable in the value statements of question 5. In order to assess the extent to which the correlation between doing music for a job and the desire to take GCSE music is more statistically significant than the other variables, a confidence interval test was undertaken. It was shown that this variable could be considered as more statistically significant than the other variables with a rate of 95% confidence.

In terms of another question, 'Are you musical?', it was found that that this perception was linked to wanting to take GCSE music at a significance of $p < 0.01$ and strength of correlation .344: a positive attitude to children's self perception of musicality may be important.

Now it may be helpful to compare these value statements with more specific questions on practical musicianship in and out of school. The responses in question 5 suggest that enjoyment of performing and making up music are an influence of some kind on the potential desire to take GCSE. Attention also needs to be paid to the specific influence of extra-curricular activities, including under this umbrella term instrumental lessons and musical involvement inside and outside of school. It should be acknowledged that, as with the previous tables, the total number of participants does vary across columns, depending on whether or not students responded to both variables; this can be seen most starkly in table 2 below, in which only 594 out of 679 (87%) students answered the question regarding participation in the school choir (accounting for both non-respondents and those who stated that there is not a choir at their school in which to participate):

Take GCSE music * Instrumental lessons

			Q3		Total
			Yes	No	1
Take GCSE music	No	Count	47	290	337
		% of Total	7.3%	44.8%	52.0%
	Not sure	Count	62	143	205
		% of Total	9.6%	22.1%	31.6%
	Yes	Count	65	41	106
		% of Total	10.0%	6.3%	16.4%
Total	Count	174	474	648	
	% of Total	26.9%	73.1%	100.0%	

P<0.01 .358

Take GCSE music * In the school choir Crosstabulation

			Q9		
			No	Yes	Total
Take GCSE music	No	Count	15	290	305
		% of Total	2.5%	48.8%	51.3%
	Not sure	Count	8	185	193
		% of Total	1.3%	31.1%	32.5%
	Yes	Count	15	81	96
		% of Total	2.5%	13.6%	16.2%
Total	Count	38	556	594	
	% of Total	6.4%	93.6%	100.0%	

P<0.01 .106

Take GCSE music * In the school orchestra Crosstabulation

			Q10		Total
			No	Yes	
Take GCSE music	No	Count	7	307	314
		% of Total	1.2%	51.1%	52.2%
	Not sure	Count	15	176	191
		% of Total	2.5%	29.3%	31.8%
	Yes	Count	27	69	96
		% of Total	4.5%	11.5%	16.0%
Total	Count	49	552	601	
	% of Total	8.2%	91.8%	100.0%	

P<0.01 .288

Take GCSE music * In any other school music groups Crosstabulation

			Q11		Total
			No	Yes	
Take GCSE music	No	Count	8	328	336
		% of Total	1.2%	50.1%	51.3%
	Not sure	Count	19	192	211
		% of Total	2.9%	29.3%	32.2%
	Yes	Count	29	79	108
		% of Total	4.4%	12.1%	16.5%
Total	Count	56	599	655	
	% of Total	8.5%	91.5%	100.0%	

P<0.01 .280

Take GCSE music * Music groups outside school Crosstabulation

			Q12		
			No	Yes	Total
Take GCSE music	No	Count	23	318	341
		% of Total	3.5%	48.3%	51.7%
	Not sure	Count	17	193	210
		% of Total	2.6%	29.3%	31.9%
	Yes	Count	30	78	108
		% of Total	4.6%	11.8%	16.4%
Total	Count	70	589	659	
	% of Total	10.6%	89.4%	100.0%	

P<0.01 .188

The results here show a statistically significant link between all five variables and wanting to do GCSE music, although the strength of correlation is not above and beyond the variables in question 5, so in this sense is not especially indicative of a significant influence in itself. What might be considered interesting is that in this research, participation in the school orchestra featured a stronger correlation than out of school participation in music: additionally, having instrumental lessons provided the greatest correlation of all extra-curricular activities and wanting to take GCSE music. Perhaps, then, it might be tentatively suggested at this stage that participation in practical music, particularly in instrumental music, is advantageous in encouraging children to show an interest in GCSE music and that music-making in school may be equally important at this stage.

The other aspect of the research was to discover whether children's perceptions of what GCSE music will be like are an influence on their wish to

take it. The correlations between the responses to the variable 'Are you going to take GCSE music?' and perceptions will be presented, interspersed with the rest of the results for this sample.

There were some statistically significant correlations regarding perceptions of GCSE music and the wish to opt for it by KS3 students. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those who said yes to 'are you going to take GCSE music' also believed that it would be fun ($p < 0.01$.440) and, conversely, disagreed with the statement that it would be boring ($p < 0.01$ -.359).

Furthermore, there was a statistically significant correlation between the desire to take GCSE music and whether or not students saw 'a point' to it ($p < 0.01$ -.364, 'there is no point in doing GCSE music'). Although the wording of this statement may be ambiguous in some respects in terms of assessing how the students may have interpreted the statement, it is an interesting perception of value. 'No point' may suggest that students who do not see the worth of GCSE music perceive this either for its own sake in terms of the advancement of musical skills, or linked to the future jobs market which could be related to the link between 'I want to do music for a job' and taking GCSE music discussed earlier.

There were also statistically significant results for the statements 'I would love to do music but I don't think I am good enough' ($p < 0.01$, -.167) and 'Anyone can do GCSE music if they try hard enough' ($p < 0.01$, .195) when compared with the question 'are you going to take GCSE music?', although the strength of these correlations was not as great as the previous ones regarding perceptions. This suggests that those who wish to take GCSE music also have a positive self-perception regarding their capabilities and, as a point of further interest, it might be helpful to look at overall numbers for the latter statement. Although there is a positive correlation between those wanting to take GCSE music and believing that anyone can do GCSE if they try hard enough, it should not be automatically assumed that the rest of the sample do not think that anyone can do GCSE music if they try hard enough; the overall numbers who agreed with this statement were high; 558

respondents agreed, and only 100 disagreed. In terms of understanding overall opinion, it is sometimes helpful to look at the wider picture.

What is also notable in relation to the results regarding perceptions is the *lack* of statistical significance of the statement 'you need to play an instrument really well to do GCSE music'. Certainly it seems from this that students do not perceive that GCSE music will require a high level of performance skill, which may have deterred some from opting for the subject, and this would seem to tie in with the idea that anyone can do GCSE music if they try hard enough. The implications for this will be discussed later on in the thesis, but this perception potentially goes against the idea that music GCSE is seen as elitist, only available to those who are musically advantaged in terms of instrumental skills. Additionally, it is worth highlighting the very high number of students who responded 'yes' to the question 'Do you like listening to music at home?': 94% of all KS3 participants stated enjoyment in this activity. Although this question did not provide a positive correlation with the desire to take GCSE music, it raises other issues; if a large proportion of children have an enjoyment of music in some capacity outside of the classroom, then this may invite questions as to how teachers may utilise this knowledge and transfer this interest to the classroom environment.

Another non-significant result was that of gender, which had no apparent influence on students' desire to take GCSE music; neither did the year group of the participants.

Quantitative Data: Between Schools

The findings across all schools for KS3 provide some interesting areas for reflection. What is also necessary, however, is to study more closely the results between schools, as this may highlight further areas for discussion. The results across all schools showed that factors such as enjoyment of class music lessons, value attached to class music lessons and making up music correlated positively and with statistical significance with the desire to take

GCSE music. To what extent does this differ between schools, however? Are some factors more of an influence on the wish to study music beyond KS3 depending on the school in which the students are receiving their music education?

There is a positive correlation between enjoying class music lessons and the desire to take GCSE music across all schools. However, looking at results between schools, there were some schools in which the link between enjoyment of class music and the wish to take GCSE music was not statistically significant, and yet the majority of students within them still reported enjoying their lessons; that is, there was no significant link between enjoyment of music lessons and the wish to continue beyond KS3, which differs from the overall results. This pattern occurred in three of the nine schools (Schools A, C and E), and suggests that enjoyment of class music is not such of an influential factor as may be thought. In two of the schools (Schools D and I), enjoyment of class music lessons did significantly correlate with the wish to take music further, as in the overall findings; in these schools, the majority of students also stated that they enjoyed their music lessons, suggesting that class music is an influential factor. In three of the schools (Schools B, F and H), the enjoyment of class music was generally low across all students, but there was a significant correlation between enjoyment of lessons and saying yes to taking GCSE music. This finding suggests that enjoyment of lessons is linked to desire to take GCSE, but it would be interesting to know why the overall enjoyment of lessons by other students is lower. In one of the schools (School G), there was neither a link between enjoyment of class music lessons and wanting to take GCSE nor a general level of enjoyment of lessons.

In the same way that the link between enjoyment of class music and wanting to take GCSE music differed between schools, so too did the other factors; some schools had significant correlations with liking classical music whereas others did not; some schools had links between the students being in a band and wanting to take GCSE music. Most crucially, the only factor

which appeared as statistically significant in every school was 'I want to do music for a job'. More interestingly, in seven out of nine of the schools, it had the strongest correlation of all factors. This was most starkly seen in two schools, School H and School I. The following illustrates the factors and relative strength of correlation ($p < 0.01$) between them and the question 'Are you going to take GCSE music?':

School H (N=124)

Enjoyment of class music .454

Class music lessons are important .456

Making up music .386

Performing music .401

I want to do music for a job .643

School I (N=85)

Enjoyment of class music .385

Class music lessons are important .334

Making up music .300

I am in a band .308

I enjoy pop music .385

I want to do music for a job .741

The results from School H and School I are indicative of the overall findings, but highlight strongly how wanting to do music for a job is, at least in these two schools and to a lesser extent the other five, the factor with the strongest correlation. Even in the results for the remaining two schools for which this was not the factor with the highest strength of correlation, it was still present as an influential and statistically significant finding.

In summary, then, the quantitative data for KS3 participants have yielded some data worthy of discussion. The value statements with which

the participants had to state their agreement or otherwise allowed for some interesting trends to emerge. Most notable of these was the link between the desire to take GCSE music and wanting to do music for a job, which was statistically significant above and beyond all other factors. However, this should not be seen in isolation, and other aspects worthy of consideration are apparent; enjoyment of class music, and value attached to class music lessons are also influential in terms of the statistics. So, too, is participation in instrumental lessons and, to a lesser degree than instrumental lessons, participation in extra-curricular activities. Being a member of an in-school orchestral group had the greatest link to wanting to take GCSE music above other types of in-school or out-of-school activities.

Further discussions relating to what these data might mean and how this might be interpreted will be discussed later in the thesis. For now, it is necessary to look at the qualitative findings for the KS3 data, and how this relates to the quantitative findings.

Qualitative Data: All Schools

The use of qualitative data in research can be to serve a variety of purposes. In the case of the KS3 data in this research, the qualitative data was intended to provide a greater level of understanding of the quantitative data, and perhaps highlight why students had answered the closed-ended questions in the way they had. An awareness of a statistically significant correlation in itself does not explain the reason behind the response. Open-ended questions, on the other hand, can enable participants to explore their feelings further and to attempt to explain why they answered the question in the way that they did. Open-ended responses that link to closed-ended responses can also indicate the participants' interpretation of the question and whether they have understood its meaning as the researcher intended, and the extent of subjectivity.

In the KS3 questionnaire, participants were asked to elaborate on certain questions, and enough space was given to allow for a couple of

sentences (bearing in mind their young age); much more space may have seemed off-putting and made the questionnaire appear much longer. In terms of analysis, the comments made by the participants were examined and themes drawn out by the process of iteration. The responses themselves were brief, and do not therefore provide much scope for quotation and in-depth analysis; participants' responses will not therefore be quoted during this section of the data analysis. For example, when students were asked what they liked about class music lessons, a typical response was 'I like the instruments' or 'playing music in pairs'. It is, however, apparent which issues are prevalent amongst the students by analysing the themes which emerged.

Two of the questions which required elaboration and gave the opportunities for further reflection were based upon why students may or may not want to take music GCSE, and also why they do or do not enjoy their class music lessons. The results of each of these questions will be presented in turn.

In terms of why students did want to take GCSE music, a theme emerged which suggested quite a high level of uncertainty, as in they were not sure why they wanted to take it, but thought they would want to in the future; it might be presumed from this that these students were at least more sure than those who answered 'not sure', although they could not define their reasons. From many students there were statements of enjoying music which contributed towards the desire to take music further. This enjoyment of music was not so much based around class music; (although a few students did comment that music was their favourite subject) more that they enjoy or 'love' music as a general entity. Another theme which emerged here was the desire to be in a band, and quite a number of the students referred to their practical musicianship skills as part of their reasoning to take the subject further.

Within this category, there was also a considerable number of students who stated that they wanted to take music GCSE for employment

purposes ('to get a good job' being stated by a number of participants) which triangulates with the quantitative data and was an interesting emergent theme.

The results for the question 'why do you *not* want to take GCSE music?' also presented themes. Two of these were based upon students' perceptions of their self-efficacy in music; not being very good at music and not perceiving themselves as musical. Additionally, another theme which emerged from this question was that they could not play an instrument and, therefore, they saw this as reason enough to say they did not want to take music GCSE. Interestingly, this seems not to triangulate with the quantitative results in which the ability to play an instrument really well was not seen by the students (in statistical terms, at least) as a significant prerequisite to taking GCSE music.

There were also a noticeable number of students who linked the choice not to take music with its future worth. As in the responses of those who said they did want to take GCSE music, future usefulness of the subject had clearly been reflected upon and was an influence in their answer, and has been a factor which has appeared in all sets of results within the quantitative data.

The other key question which required an open response was that of defining, as much as possible, what they enjoy or do not enjoy about class music lessons. In relation to what students do enjoy about class music lessons, composing featured heavily, as did 'playing' music, most specifically on the keyboards and instruments. Students also cited listening to music as an enjoyable feature of music lessons; this could perhaps be an important link to music at home, as so many children reported this as a positive activity in the closed-ended question. Overall, these emergent themes, which were all based upon practical musicianship, support the quantitative findings which show a statistical significance between wanting to do GCSE music and enjoying practical music-making.

With regards to what children do not enjoy about class music lessons, a majority of students reported the lack of classroom management, or rather, other people's behaviour who are perceived as not taking the subject seriously, as the reason for their lack of enjoyment. Other themes were writing, theory and classical music, and the word 'boring' was used frequently. The teacher was also cited on occasion as being a negative impact on the enjoyment of their music lessons, perhaps linked to the other themes, including issues of classroom management. What is interesting here is to ponder on the reasons why some children do not take the subject seriously. It is difficult to really understand this simply on the comments within this questionnaire, and whether or not this attitude might be more prevalent in music lessons than in other subject areas such as science or art, for example. Given the results of other aspects of the questionnaire, perhaps the feeling that music is not going to be useful for the future may have an impact on perceptions towards the lessons themselves and contribute towards bad behaviour, although it is quite possible that many teachers would argue strongly against this, believing that children should take the subject seriously as a subject in its own right, not necessarily for what they can get out of it in the future.

Whatever the reasoning behind the children's responses, the results of this questionnaire, quantitative and qualitative, have raised interesting areas for discussion for later in the thesis with which to link the theory evaluated within the literature review.

It is now necessary to report the results for the KS4 data; the questionnaire data will be presented first followed by the results of the focus group.

Key Stage 4 and A-Level Results

Questionnaire Data

As with the KS3 questionnaire, the KS4 and A-level questionnaire was designed to explore opinions on music at GCSE as well as more general attitudes towards music inside and outside of school. The structure of the questionnaire enabled closed-ended responses as well as the opportunities for more open-ended responses. The different question types will be presented and analysed in turn.

Quantitative Data: All Schools

Throughout the process of designing the questionnaires, it was thought more appropriate to offer the younger participants within the KS3 group a more limited range of responses for the closed-ended responses, so as to limit potential confusion. It was felt that the slightly older students within KS4 and beyond would be able to cope better with a wider range of possible responses which would enable a stronger opinion to be expressed. The way of representing this within the questionnaire was with the use of Likert-scale responses: students had the option of choosing from 7 options, ranging from 'agree strongly' to 'disagree strongly' and with the mid-point of the scale representing 'no opinion'.

The KS3 questionnaire analysis was concerned largely with correlating the answers given to a particular question, 'are you going to take GCSE music?' to decipher the influence of other factors on the response to this key question. All of the participants within the KS4 and A-level group had opted to take GCSE music, and it was from this sample that the group had been selected; the purpose of this sampling, therefore, was not so much to explore the students' speculative thoughts, rather to try and decipher their actual reasons for opting for music as far as they were able to report retrospectively. The questionnaire also focused on the importance of music in their lives as a general interest and activity: are those who take GCSE music particularly active musicians outside of school and/or in school, for example? The responses from the questionnaire were intended to investigate whether there might be a particular profile of student who takes GCSE music

together with their attitudes towards KS3 music, the results of which may triangulate with the other data in the study.

The results will be presented in order of how the closed-ended questions were ordered on the questionnaire: the value statements within Q3 will therefore be analysed first. Using SPSS, the mean response for each statement was calculated, which was enough to enable an indication of strength of opinion in relation not only to each statement, but also in comparison to the other statements. The decision to analyse this set of results using a non-parametric method was to acknowledge that an overall picture was required, rather than the more inferential results which a parametric test would have yielded. As this data is intended to triangulate with the other sample groups' data rather than to make bigger claims and generalisations, it was considered that deciphering means would be adequate analysis for the purposes of this sample:

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q3A	271	1	7	2.17	1.346
3B	274	1	7	1.17	.671
3C	272	1	7	4.15	2.035
3D	269	1	7	2.83	1.660
3E	268	1	7	1.83	1.223
3F	270	1	6	1.91	1.077
3G	270	1	6	2.13	1.204
3H	272	1	7	2.79	1.724
3I	273	1	7	1.99	1.422
3J	272	1	7	2.94	1.836
3K	272	1	7	2.52	1.411
3L	272	1	7	3.14	1.433
3M	268	1	7	2.84	1.463
Valid N (listwise)	249				

The statement agreed with most strongly overall was in relation to 'I like listening to music at home' (3B) which had a mean of 1.17; the frequency statistics reported that 90% of all participants had circled 1 on the Likert scale. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this suggests that students who opt for GCSE music do enjoy music in some capacity. Other mean responses which fell into the 'strongly agree' section of the response options included 'Music is an

important part of my life' (3E) and 'My family likes music' (3F). The most negative response was in answer to the statement 'I enjoy classical music' (3C) which had a mean response of 4.15, but yet the highest standard deviation; this suggests that although there was a negative leaning towards this statement, there was more variety of opinion amongst participants than for other statements and perhaps reflects the diversity of musical tastes amongst GCSE and A level candidates. The other statements' results provided some interesting scope for reflection. In terms of KS3 music and its influence on the participants in this group, the mean response for 'I enjoyed class music in Years 7-9' was 2.5, with a standard deviation of 1.4; this suggests that music lessons in KS3, although not being portrayed through this part of the questionnaire as overwhelmingly influential in terms of enjoyment, were not negatively experienced by the majority, and clearly not enough to put them off taking GCSE or A-level music. Perceptions of friends' enjoyment of KS3 music (3L) were less positive than their own at a mean of 3.14, but it could be argued that there is not enough of a difference here to make meaningful speculations.

Perhaps most significant to discuss in relation to the quantitative findings in the KS3 data is the response to question 3J, 'I would like to do music for a job', which in the KS3 responses emerged as the most influential factor in whether or not GCSE music was going to be opted for. Although this came out as a mean agreement at 2.94 in the KS4 and A-level questionnaire, this does not stand out in comparison to other factors such as enjoyment of class music at KS3 or the other statements in this question. The standard deviation of 1.8 in Q3J suggests some variety in opinion amongst participants, but arguably not enough to make any claims overall: comparisons across all data will be discussed more fully after presenting all of the results.

The next set of responses to be analysed related to questions on extra-curricular activities. Although the results from this question do not indicate any influence of the participants' decision to take GCSE music, as they had

already made the option choice, it might provide an indication of the profile of those who have taken music beyond KS3 and allow for some triangulation of the other data. From the raw KS4 and A-level questionnaire data, it appears that the participants in this sample are more involved in music out of school than in school; a larger percentage of children answered 'yes' to 'Are you in any music groups outside school?' than they did to the question of their involvement inside school. It is important to note, however, that music in school is broken down into three questions in the questionnaire depending on type of activity, whereas music outside of school is contained within only one question; it is therefore necessary not to link the in-school extra-curricular responses together, as one participant may have answered yes to a combination of the three questions and so the responses are therefore not independent across all questions. However, each can be looked at individually and compared with the out of school question. In each of the three in-school questions there are a greater proportion of students who are not involved in the stated activity than who are. A confidence interval test can be taken to determine to what extent a claim can be made about the difference between any of the music in-school questions and the music out of school question. In terms of participation in the choir and the orchestra, there is a 95% confidence interval that there is a difference between in school and out of school participation; that is, students are more likely to be involved in music outside the school than they are to be involved in the choir or orchestra in school. The difference between participation in other school groups and music out of school is not enough of a difference, however, to be able to confidently state that music out of school is more prevalent for this sample. From this, then, it might be suggested that the *type* of in-school activity is more significant than the institutional setting itself: it is not that students are more likely to be involved in out of school music *per se*, rather that they are perhaps selecting more carefully what they join in school depending on their needs and interests. Interestingly, when examining the types of extra-curricular music groups listed in which students take part

outside of school, choirs, bands and orchestras feature heavily; perhaps, therefore, at KS4 and A-level, students are more inclined to take certain types of music making outside of school, although the reason and significance of this is beyond the scope of this study.

Looking at the bigger picture of this question, then, it is clear that there is not an overwhelming involvement of KS4 and A-level students in extra-curricular activities, either in school or out of school, although this is nevertheless a part of many of the students' musical lives. Related to this, it should also be noted that all but two of the total participants (N=275) in this sample reported playing an instrument, indicating a practical involvement in music by almost all who take music beyond KS3 in some capacity in this sample; extra-curricular involvement is only a part of this.

The next results to be analysed are in relation to the question of the reasons why this sample took GCSE music. The question required participants to rank their responses to the question 'why did you take GCSE music?' from a selection of 8 possible choices. It was believed that this type of question might enable the students to think carefully about why they had chosen the subject, but with an emphasis on prioritising their choices. The results were dealt with in the same way as question 3, in that the mean response to each choice between 1 and 8 was calculated across all participants and then put in numerical order; this way, a general picture of priority of reason might be observed across all participants. At this point, however, it is important to make explicit that the students' interpretation of the question varied considerably. Although all participants had been asked to rank the statements from 1-8, some had only ranked some of the statements, and inconsistently. For example, one student had ranked one statement as a 1, (the reason most applicable to her choice) and had ranked two further statements both at number 8, leaving five statements unranked. There were many variations of this type of response which are worthy of attention in themselves: clearly, even in the cases in which students had misunderstood the need to rank all statements, their answers still indicated

an obvious priority of choice, just not in the way the researcher had intended. Despite the discrepancies in the interpretation of the question, the decision was made to analyse the responses across all participants in the same way as originally intended, as it was felt that the participants had understood the basic concept of priority, and their answers could therefore still indicate a general perspective:

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
9F	253	1	8	3.87	2.449
Q9A	254	1	8	4.21	1.993
9B	251	1	8	6.42	2.142
9C	248	1	8	4.38	2.143
9D	253	1	8	2.74	1.914
9E	249	1	9	5.23	2.354
9G	250	1	8	5.84	2.037
9H	253	1	9	3.87	2.068
Valid N (listwise)	240				

From this table, the mean responses can be observed and ranked, although it can also be seen, as already explained, that some students had misinterpreted the question by not stating a rank (apparent in the N column) and others had even ranked a 9 for two of the statements, (for 9E and 9H) an option that was not available had the question been completed accurately. Taking these factors into account, the reason ranked highest of all statements on average was 9D, 'I was good at music', followed by a joint second rank position for 'I wanted to follow a career in music' (9F) and 'KS3 music lessons were fun' (9H) and 'I liked the teacher' (9A) was ranked 4th. The lower ranking scores, and perhaps the least influential factors according to the results in the table, were: 'The extra-curricular activities were really good', (9C) ranked at 5th place; 'I was told that I should', (9E) ranked 6th overall; 'My friend was doing it', (9G) ranked 7th, and 'I couldn't think of anything else to do', (9B) ranked 8th or 9th. Despite there being issues of clarity on behalf of the participants, and perhaps in turn in the explanation of the question requirements on the questionnaire itself, these

responses are in line with what might be expected given the KS3 results and allows an overall picture to emerge.

The remainder of the questionnaire which yielded results worthy of attention comprised of open-ended questions which were intended to draw out further information from the participants and were analysed qualitatively. It is to the qualitative responses within this questionnaire that the analysis now turns.

Qualitative data: All Schools

As with the KS3 qualitative data, the KS4 and A-Level participants did not give lengthy responses to the open-ended questions, thus direct quotations from students are not included in this part of the data analysis. Students' responses to being asked what they enjoyed about KS3 music lessons, for example, included comments such as '(being) on the instruments every lesson' and 'group composition and song writing'. Nevertheless, emergent themes are apparent from the data collected, and will be presented here.

The first question which allowed for a more open response in this questionnaire followed on from the ranking question most recently discussed, pertaining to why the students within this group had opted to take GCSE music. Due to the confusion on the part of a number of participants for the ranking question, it was positive that they had the immediate opportunity to clarify their opinions in this space and also to add anything which had not been included within the 8 possible statements in question 9. Following analysis of the emergent themes within the more open-ended responses, the main response was that the participants 'enjoyed' and 'loved' music; the statements in question 9 had included 'I am good at music', linked to attainment level and 'I enjoyed music at KS3', linked to class music in particular, but had not included a reference to a general love of music, possibly acquired in and out of the classroom. Another response included the family's influence on the decision, although only a small number of

respondents cited this: however, it is still worth including this here in addition to participants' general love of music.

The other open-ended question which offered some interesting information were those which asked students to look back to their musical experiences in Years 7-9 and comment on what they had or had not enjoyed about music. The responses here were able to further inform previous questions relating to the impact of class music lessons on option choices. Enjoyment of KS3 music was reported by all participants, to a greater or a lesser extent, and from this it seems reasonable to surmise that school music did not put them off opting for music: what was it about those lessons that this group either did or did not enjoy?

Across the responses to what they enjoyed about KS3 music, the overwhelming theme was that of practical music-making, either in a performance or composition capacity. The words 'performing', 'playing', 'practical' and 'composing' appeared frequently in the responses. The phrase 'working in a group' also appeared enough to make this activity seem influential in the students' positive memories of class music lessons. In contrast, listening work and learning about theory or history were only cited by a small minority; this suggests that learning through practical music, and of course this can include the development of listening and theoretical skills, was the most positively-received type of music teaching for the respondents in this category.

In terms of what they did not enjoy about KS3 music, it was also relatively easy to pick out themes. A very large majority of students had cited those who were not interested in music as detracting from the quality of the lessons. Poor behaviour and a general lack of regard for the subject from peers was clearly a large element of negative experiences of class music at KS3. The content of the lesson also featured in the responses and could be considered a theme: 'boring' lessons, including writing and theory, were cited by numerous respondents. The effect of the teacher also featured as a negative influence, and was often linked to the content of the lessons. It is

difficult to ascertain to what extent the cited poor behaviour of their peers was linked to either the tasks and/or the teacher, but it might be considered that such factors were in some way interlinked.

Although the negative responses to KS3 music are interesting, the views of the participants within this group should be studied remembering that the experience was not bad enough to put them off opting for GCSE music and do not represent the same cross-section of participants as those in the KS3 sample; however, as music lessons at KS3 were not cited as being the most influential factor for choosing GCSE music within this group, it is interesting to look at what they did not enjoy about their KS3 lessons, as this information may inform the KS3 data. That is, from comparing the KS4 and A-level responses with those from the KS3 data relating to the same question of enjoyment of class music at KS3, it might be possible to understand more about the reasons *why* class music is influential in option choices, as much as *the extent* that it is: understanding the reasons behind the results is arguably as important as providing the results themselves, and again illustrates the justification for including open-ended questions within the questionnaires to allow the possibility for this to happen.

The comparisons across the data will be done following analysis of all data collected. The final questionnaire to be analysed is that which BMus and PGCE students completed and, like the KS3 and KS4 and A-level questionnaires, contained both closed and open questions in order to try and gather as much information as possible from the participants.

BMus and PGCE Results

The rationale behind asking this sample group to complete the questionnaire was to try and gain further insight into musical choices made at the end of KS3 by those who had gone further up the educational ladder, and who had thus gained more experience of learning music and the impact of motivation on the desire to continue. Such experience may assist them in

the ability to rationalise their decisions and also enable them to make suggestions as to why GCSE music take-up numbers are nationally lower than some other optional subjects.

As with the previous questionnaires, the quantitative data will be analysed first, followed by the qualitative data.

Quantitative Data

The first part of the questionnaire to be analysed quantitatively is question 9 which required responses to a series of statements designed to elicit opinions on school music and general musical development. It should be noted at this point that this question is not explicitly linked to the students' desire to take GCSE music, rather as an indication of their perspective on their musical lives and influences which may or may not have had an impact on the desire to continue with formal music education: a direct focus on their option choices was requested later in the questionnaire. The statements asked the students to reflect back on their own experiences of secondary school and it is hoped that the results will provide an opportunity for triangulation with the other data and some interesting points for discussion in their own right. As with the KS4 and A-level questionnaire, the respondents were given a choice of 7 responses on a Likert scale, ranging from Agree Strongly (1) to Disagree Strongly (7), with a mid-point allowing the option of No Opinion (4).

The data were put into SPSS and descriptive frequencies calculated to decipher the mean responses and standard deviations of each statement. On analysing the data, several interesting results were evident:

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
9a	46	1	7	3.48	1.773
9b	46	1	7	2.61	1.527
9c	46	1	7	1.80	1.344
9d	46	1	7	4.35	1.876
9e	46	1	7	4.02	1.961
9f	45	1	7	5.13	1.740
9g	46	1	7	2.33	1.752

9h	46	1	7	3.09	1.998
9i	46	1	7	4.24	1.728
9j	46	1	7	3.78	1.685
9k	46	2	7	4.11	1.567
9l	46	1	7	2.33	1.477
9m	45	1	4	1.16	.562
9n	45	1	7	4.76	1.897
Valid N (listwise)	44				

In terms of the participants' musical development and the influences upon this, question 9C (My instrumental teacher had a more positive influence on my musical development than my class music teacher) elicited the strongest response. This is certainly an interesting result as it suggests, for this group at least, that the place of instrumental music tuition provided the most meaningful influence in a positive sense on their musical development, and more so than the influence of family over class teacher (9B). There is no further indication from the response to question 9C, however, whether or not the influence of the instrumental teacher was to do with good teaching or with the general quality of the interpersonal relationship, or a mixture of both factors.

With regards to the effectiveness of music at KS3, there was an overall enjoyment of class music lessons (9A), although this was not a strongly felt opinion, though the standard deviation from the mean suggests a variety of responses across the scale from participants. Enjoyment of class music might well be linked to quality of teaching, as the perspective that music was taught really well at their school (9E) produced a mean suggesting 'no opinion' but with quite a wide standard deviation from this mean, indicative of some participants having quite varying experiences from their fellow participants. Linked to quality of teaching, question 9F (It didn't matter if KS3 was taught really well as long as the teacher was nice) was the most strongly disagreed statement of all in terms of the mean response: perhaps, therefore, although the interpersonal relationship between teacher and pupil is important to an extent, and may well help to develop an overall enjoyment of music lessons, it is the perceived quality of teaching that is more

influential in the effectiveness of class music, and perhaps this could be the same as instrumental tuition, although there is no specific data to support this presumption.

One of the statements relating to more generic issues in music education yielded note-worthy data. The question of whether or not music should be taught in schools as part of the National Curriculum produced the most strongly positive response of all the statements in this question, and with the smallest standard deviation: this sample group, therefore, appear to highly rate the place of music in schools, despite the somewhat less than positive experiences that were had by them at KS3. To some extent, this response is unsurprising: it would be a point equally worthy of discussion if the group of teacher trainees in particular had disagreed with the notion of music in schools. What could be surmised from this result, however, is the possibility that this sample group recognise the *potential* of music in schools to inspire and encourage: a less than positive personal experience at KS3 does not perhaps diminish the ideology that music education in schools is very much worth promoting.

The next question to be analysed quantitatively is question 11 which, like the KS4 and A-level questionnaire, required students to rank the reasons why they opted for GCSE music. As with the former sample group, some of the respondents in this group also misinterpreted the question, and either did not rank all options or gave more than one reason the same number instead of attributing a different number to each statement as required. Additionally, quite a few did not respond to this question at all, possibly due to a lack of understanding about the layout of the question or the perception that it would take too long. Nevertheless, the results are still worthy of attention and analysis was carried out. The descriptive statistics are as follows:

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
11a	40	1	8	4.98	1.732
11b	39	3	8	7.05	1.450
11c	40	1	8	3.55	1.467
11d	41	1	7	1.73	1.025
11e	40	1	8	4.23	1.687
11f	40	1	8	2.18	1.893
11g	40	2	8	6.80	1.588
11h	40	1	8	4.98	1.732
Valid N (listwise)	39				

Although the descriptive statistics in the above table indicate variability in the consistency of the approach to answering the question amongst participants, the mean responses to each part of this question can be observed with interest. The statement which provoked the most positive response in respect of wanting to take GCSE music is 11d, 'I was good at music'. The next most positive response according to the mean is 11f, 'I wanted to follow a career in music'. By contrast, the least likely reasons for opting for GCSE music based on the results from this question are 11b, 'I couldn't think of anything else to do' and 11g, 'My friend was doing it' which may not be surprising given that common sense may dictate that these two statements may be the least likely motivations for opting for the subject. However, having such statements in the options at least helped the participants to reflect upon all their incentives and communicate these in the context of the question.

In terms of the influence of class music on their option choice, KS3 music lessons being fun (11h) and liking the teacher (11a) produced exactly the same result at a mean of 4.98. This might suggest that participants saw the two factors as linked, although no claim should be made from this, but it is an interesting result. Regardless of the meaning behind why these two statements produced the same result, the fact is that class music at KS3, whether in the content of lesson or liking the teacher, or a combination of the two, did not inspire the participants in this sample to take GCSE music as the foremost reason. Being good at music and wanting to follow a career in it

seems to have had more of an impact. Of course, these statements only give an indication of opinion and from looking at these results alone, we cannot be sure *why* students felt the way they did. For example, being good at music might have come in part from KS3 music lessons, so it is important not to disentangle the results too much. Nevertheless, this raw data does give some room for discussion. The extent to which the quantitative results from this sample triangulate with the other groups' data will be explored at the end of this chapter.

Returning to the idea of looking for reasons behind responses, the analysis now turns to the qualitative data for this group.

Qualitative Data

As with the other sample groups, it was considered important that the participants had the opportunity to express their opinions more widely and elaborate on the responses they had given to the closed-ended questions. Within this sample group, a comparatively large amount of space was given to allow for free response across different questions, and the end of the questionnaire contained several questions intended to elicit opinion about the reasons why national take-up for music GCSE is low and what might be done about it. Given the older age of the participants and the fact that the PGCE students in particular are encouraged to become reflective practitioners as part of their training, it was considered appropriate, and potentially very illuminating, to obtain their perspectives on the research problem.

The first question to be analysed is question 12 and leads on from the quantitative question just explored in the previous section (Q11). Although this is not the first open-ended question within the questionnaire, it makes more sense to analyse Q12 first in order to link it to Q11, and then go on to analyse the other open-ended questions.

Question 12 asked respondents to reflect on any other reasons why they opted to take GCSE music, other than the ones pre-given in Q11, and to

include a rank for these; this enabled all participants to comment on any aspect that had not been included in the eight given statements, or even to elaborate on the answers they gave. Only 16 students of the 52 in the sample chose to answer Q12, so the majority of participants presumably did not feel that there was a strong enough alternative reason other than those in Q11 to cite separately. In fact, family pressure cited by one participant, as well as a general enjoyment of music and performing (as opposed to class music enjoyment specifically) were the only reasons given which had not been included as a statement in Q11. Other participants reiterated one of the factors given in Q11: 6 students, for example, gave their 'other' factor as leading to further study or to a career in music and elaborated on this by stating what type of route they wished to follow.

This question, then, did not seem to give any new insight to the reasons why students might opt to take GCSE music, although it was certainly worth giving the participants the opportunity to do this.

Part of the aim of the current research is to try and ascertain the effect of class music on option-taking, as well as other factors, and questions 11 and 12 did not indicate that KS3 music was a highly influential factor to this sample group, at least. To attempt to explore this issue further, students were asked towards the beginning of the questionnaire to state the best and worst aspects of class music at KS3 from what they could remember.

Key themes which emerged from the responses regarding the best aspects of class music at KS3 were centred around the practical aspects of lessons, such as composition, including the group work aspect of this, and playing on instruments. The themes which emerged from the worst aspects of music at KS3 were other students' poor behaviour in terms of not taking the subject seriously, and a lack of differentiation from the teacher in that the work was too easy and the respondents did not therefore feel challenged. Linked to this, the quality of the teaching came under scrutiny, with respondents commenting that the lessons were not well-structured. It is interesting that this was noted as a down-side to the lessons from the teacher

trainee respondents who were answering the questionnaire in their current situation as trainee teachers and thus becoming more aware of what it is to structure a lesson well and the positive effects that this can produce.

What differentiates this questionnaire from the other two distributed in this research is, as previously mentioned, the amount of opportunity there is for quite extensive reflection, not only on their own motivation to continue past KS3 music, but also on the reasons why there is an arguable issue with relatively lower numbers of GCSE uptake. It is on the questions which address these issues that the analysis will now focus. When direct quotations have been included in this part of the analysis, each has been given a course title, gender and number in order to give a broad profile of the respondent. The number is appended to indicate an individual's identity whilst retaining anonymity.

Question 13 asked what motivated the participants to continue to GCSE music and beyond, and it was asked hoping to elicit reflections on their musical journey since KS3 and how this had developed. The themes which emerged from their responses were a general enjoyment of music, wanting a career in music and the enjoyment of practical music-making. Another key word across the responses was 'encouragement'; many participants cited that they felt encouraged and supported in their musical studies which they found inspiring and motivational. This inspiration came from various sources as can be read in the extract below, taken from one person's response to this question:

An inspirational piano teacher who...gave me extra advice and help. Meeting encouraging adjudicators...Subsequently meeting like-minded teenagers at the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland...Also being inspired by more able friends (BMus, Female, 1).

This individual drew motivation from a variety of sources, and other participants listed instrumental teachers and classroom teachers as key motivators through their encouragement. One participant wrote a reflective response which pointed to an intrinsic motivation and a very personal desire to want to study music further:

(I have) a strong fundamental love of music...of expressing myself creatively. It almost feels like there is no choice – I have to be involved with music in order to feel happy and fulfilled (BMus, Female, 2).

This is quite a resounding comment, in that within this statement lies more than the learning of skills or the furthering of one's career: herein lies an acknowledgment of the effect that music can have on the emotional well-being of a person, and the place that music may have in the everyday lives, not just the educational lives, of people.

The next question required participants to reflect upon why the national uptake of GCSE music is low compared to other option choices. Having been through the musical educational system and made several options pertaining to their musical futures, it was felt that some rich qualitative data may be obtained from asking this question.

In some ways, the responses to this were similar to the last question in terms of the emergent themes; this could be in part because the students were answering this from their own perspectives rather than speculating as to the views of all children from musical and social backgrounds different to their own. The subjectivity involved in answering open-ended questions needs to be acknowledged, but at the same time the themes across all participants were apparent.

Perceptions of music as both a subject and a viable career option were cited by a number of participants; the respondents perceived that it is not always taken seriously as a subject by either the students or other individuals. Below are some of the responses related to these issues:

It isn't recognised as a 'good' GCSE qualification. It seems pointless to people without a specific passion for the subject (BMus, Male, 3).

Maybe GCSE music is seen to be less vocational/sensible than other subjects (BMus, Female, 2).

People think that they won't get jobs at the end of studying music (BMus, Female, 4).

Schools do not encourage music. They seem to encourage science stuff more. And they don't like it if you put music before 'academic' subjects (BMus, Male, 5).

Most people think it's a waste of time – especially parents who don't like their children studying music/art/drama (BMus Female, 6).

From a personal experience, music was never really encouraged in comparison to core subjects, particularly at A level where I was told that music would be a waste of time by the Head of Physics (PGCE, Male, 7).

The other factor cited was that music GCSE would be perceived by many as too specialised, and brings to the fore the issue about music for all:

I think the main reason is because music is quite difficult and requires much more effort and practice than other areas at the same stage (BMus, Female, 8).

It's a specialised subject...not everyone is as good at it. Students are often put off/disillusioned (BMus, Female, 9).

Children feel that if they can't play an instrument or read music that they are no good at the subject. Seen as an elitist subject (PGCE, Female, 10).

Because it's more specialised than other GCSE subjects. Natural ability is more of a factor than in other subjects (BMus, Male, 11).

Another theme was that classical music was seen to pre-dominate the music classroom at lower secondary school age and teaching was therefore out of touch with children's tastes and interests. Additionally, the low uptake of GCSE music should be addressed from primary school age:

I think it needs to be a more important part of primary children's education for it to continue into secondary school and beyond (BMus, Female, 12).

If primary school instrumental teaching is very solid and expectations of children are also high (backed up by fun with ensemble playing) then it's also very important for this to be continued at secondary school (BMus, Female, 1).

Overall, however, the most striking results from this question were undoubtedly the attitudes by many that music was regarded as a 'soft' option and could not offer as much to a child's future career as other subjects; additionally, the perceptions of students themselves that they would not be good enough, as GCSE music requires additional skills and/or natural ability that might not be expected in other subjects. The validity of these beliefs will be discussed in relation to the literature later in the thesis. For

now, let us explore the responses to the next question which required the participants to reflect upon what might be done about the low-uptake.

One of the themes to emerge in this question of what can be done to improve GCSE uptake rates was curriculum-based; many participants commented that the variety of genres studied at KS3 should be greater, and a more modern slant taken to music education to include popular music styles; for these to be taught in an interesting way and to cater for all abilities. Relevance also featured as a potential factor for improving numbers:

Improve areas of study at KS3 to increase interest and GCSE uptake (PGCE, Male, 13).

Make it more relevant to pupils – less concentration on classical music (but not totally excluded) (PGCE, Male, 14).

Make it more accessible to all. Higher importance placed on it (PGCE, Female, 15).

More interactive activities and a focus on a range of musics, music that the pupils are keen on can be integrated. Catering for all methods of learning, those who can't read music etc. (BMus, Female, 16).

Children are more likely to be interested in class music (and therefore carry on to GCSE) if they feel what they are doing is relevant /appropriate and practical (BMus, Male, 17).

What is interesting about the reflections on the curriculum was that these participants were not suggesting abandoning the teaching of classical music in favour of popular music; the key, it seems, is in the integration of different styles and a balance of these. Also, with regards to difficulty and seriousness with which some do or do not approach music as a school subject, a balance in attitude was also suggested here by one participant who commented that:

Students (should) feel that the music taught is relevant to them and to their daily lives. That there is a sense of play/exploration on the one hand, and a real sense of achievement/development on the other! (BMus, Female, 2).

This quotation almost gives permission for music educators and music students to embrace and be guilt-free about the creative and enjoyable aspects of learning music, and not to get caught up in the extrinsic need to justify it as a 'serious' or proper subject to the aforementioned Head of

Physics or the like. Yet this is also not to diminish the academic level of music as a subject in so many ways and the vast array of skills which are needed to demonstrate further musical understanding, whether those are of a subjective (creative) or objective (fact-based) nature: the epistemological standing of music can come into debate here.

Related to the catering of all ability levels, it was suggested by some that streaming should take place in music at KS3. As one participant put it, 'I found it frustrating spending hours on things I already knew' (BMus, Female, 18). The same participant was also keen to point out that those in the lower ability group, in her words less 'musically talented', should still be encouraged to feel that they are capable and should not be excluded, thus presenting a non-exclusivist attitude. Her point, rather, is that those students who do perhaps display more of a natural ability, however that may be defined, are not lagging behind or covertly expected to gain much of their musical development outside of the school classroom at KS3.

Other comments included encouraging children's musical interest as young as possible and retaining this through to secondary school; supporting non-specialists at primary school to deliver the primary music curriculum more confidently was also cited.

Related to the jobs market, one participant commented that students should be shown 'what the numerous career options are, as well as how music education can be applied to other aspects of life (!?)' (PGCE, Male, 19). The student's use of punctuation marks in brackets after this quotation have been included, as they indicate that this respondent is certainly not convinced that this is a viable suggestion, and it is worth making that clear. Additionally, another participant commented that the subject should be promoted 'as more useful to future careers' (PGCE, Female, 20).

A very interesting comment was made by one participant who wrote a short but thought-provoking remark when asked to make suggestions to

improve take-up. He simply responded: 'I don't know: do more people need to take GCSE music?' (BMus, Male, 5). This is an important question and really addresses the purposes of asking the research questions. Arguably, the issue is not so much that not enough students are taking it per se, rather the reasons for it. Aside from financial considerations and the viability of running a course with few numbers, this question puts back into the research the idea that it cannot be automatically assumed that the goal of the research is to increase numbers taking GCSE music; it is the exploration into the purposes, and from this possibly the chance to encourage more students to take it if necessary, and the wider impact of lower uptake rates.

The final question of its type within this questionnaire was intended to give the participants a chance to expand a little more on their opinions of class music at KS3. Although they had had the opportunity to state their best and worst experiences at the beginning of the questionnaire, they were now being asked to offer any more opinions on class music after their more in-depth reflections on GCSE uptake. The position of this question was important and it could be that, having thought carefully about their own motivation to continue formal music education and the reasons why GCSE is not as popular as other subjects, they may be able to offer further insight.

The majority of students in this sample chose not to answer the question at all, possibly because they felt they had already given enough opinion about this, and/or possibly because they had reached the end of quite a lengthy questionnaire, during which they had been asked to reflect in some detail, were tired and felt it unnecessary to answer further on a topic on which they had already reflected.

Of the students who did answer, differentiation and catering for all abilities was the most frequently cited issue. Also important to note is that some respondents answered from their own experience of learning at KS3 and others answered from a speculative point of view:

They could have been slightly more structured and accommodated different abilities (BMus, Female, 21).

There was always the trouble of having to try and teach an entire class of mixed abilities (BMus, Male, 22).

Maybe stream it so that stronger candidates have harder questions (BMus, Female, 23).

Involving and engaging everyone irrespective of their level of ability was important to some, with one student commenting that 'children with or without talents should be encouraged' (BMus, Female, 24). One participant recognised the difficulty of the social context of learning at this stage:

This is a complicated age – they are not young children anymore and absolutely do not want to be patronised. Tapping into the types of music that they respond to is important – but I also think that theory should be taught concurrently with this. Challenging pupils at this stage will lead them to having the confidence to undertake the challenge of GCSE (BMus, Female, 1).

The sentiments of this quotation have important repercussions when considering the motivation to continue formal music education: although this respondent is saying that 'tapping into' relevant musical genres that recognise the holistic musical preferences of the child is a good thing, there is also, it seems, the acknowledgement that this should not simply be approached with a view to appease, but as part of a wider educational aim to provide a well-balanced musical education. Moreover, easy work may make the student feel as if they have achieved and award instant gratification, but this may not lead to a sense of intrinsic satisfaction that comes with facing a challenge and acquiring deeper understanding: the difference between these two states of learning outcomes are explored within the literature on theories of motivation, and will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The analysis of the BMus and PGCE results has, as with the other sample groups, given some quantitative data to explore through the closed-ended questions, as well as some deeper issues upon which to reflect from the open-ended, qualitatively-analysed material.

Before evaluating all the questionnaire data and looking for ways in which the data triangulates, it is necessary to analyse the findings from the focus group.

Focus Group Results.

The idea behind conducting a focus group was to explore in-depth the opinions and thoughts of a selection of Year 10 students; those who had opted to take GCSE music and undertaken a certain amount of the course. It was felt that the data obtained from this may add further scope for discussion.

The total number of students involved was six, which allowed each student to have an opportunity to express their thoughts in a small group. The interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was recorded with consent. The recording was then made into a transcript and the analysis could begin. In terms of analysing qualitative data, there is considerable thought as to the best way to approach it. The best approach considered for this group was that of the 'constant comparative method' and 'continuous refinement' of data explored by Wellington (2000) based upon his interpretation of other researchers' approaches to qualitative analysis.

Part of the process, as detailed in the methodology section of this thesis, is the initial immersion in the data, and looking for emergent themes and categories which can then turn the data into something more meaningful. There is of course the possibility that when looking for themes, the researcher may be influenced by what results are hoped for or expecting, risking a certain amount of researcher bias, and this is considered an inevitable part of the research act. However, to keep this in mind when analysing the data and to attempt some objectivity may assist in presenting results which are true to the data and to the research.

The interview transcript was analysed using the method described, and the main themes and categories will be outlined below. Occasionally, the

syntax and grammar has been slightly altered to aid clarity, but the meaning has not been affected. The full transcript is included in an appendix.

Why did the students choose GCSE music?

This was the first question asked, as much of the interview was to be based upon this and issues related to it. The categories which emerged from this question, and others pertaining to it, were:

- Instrumental learning.

Five of the six students cited that they already played a musical instrument and that this was a reason they opted to take GCSE music. Although this was not cited as the sole reason and at this stage no justification as to why this was important was given, there was a definite sense that the ability to play an instrument well was important in their decision.

- Family influence.

Half of the group cited that family, mainly siblings who had already taken music GCSE, were an influence in their decision, as were parents: a family who were interested in music and encouraging of the subject were, for the students in this group, a major influence in their decision.

- Teacher.

All students stated that the teacher made quite a big difference in their decision to take music, although they were keen to point out that this was not as much as family influences. Nevertheless, a considerable amount of discussion time was spent on this issue. One student commented:

It (taking GCSE music) has a lot to do with the teachers, I think, about why people do it because like if you have...it makes a difference about what you are going to pick. If you have a sort of teacher that's just like 'I don't really care, I'm not going to teach you I'm just going to chat to you all the time'. Then have a teacher who actually cares about it.

This comment was followed by a fellow student who stated that the influence of a teacher was 'one that pushes you onto music and says 'go on, you can do music'' and another student added 'and makes it fun as well.' The students were quite clear as to what traits were important in the role of the effective teacher, including personal characteristics and attitudes towards teaching the subject. These included having a passion for the subject itself, strong subject knowledge as well as having a respectful attitude towards the students as young people. The comments related to the latter point were cross-referenced with other subject areas:

Some teachers are more like machines than teachers because there are quite a lot of the maths teachers that are so precise. You sort of don't connect with them at all. It's like 'I'm here to teach, now leave'.

What constitutes an effective connection with a teacher may in some ways be difficult to define, but aspects such as not patronising the students and implementing a variety of teaching methods (the regular use of text books was not regarded positively) were cited as helpful in building positive relationships with the teacher. Encouragement and belief in the student as a musician also aided the decision process, with one student stating the following:

If they (the teacher) acts as if they think you have some talent for music 'cos then it makes you think, if they think I'm good at it, then maybe I want to take it. Because they actually show an interest in what you are doing and it helps.

Thus, it could be said that a positive teacher attitude has an effect of self-efficacy and motivation which may lead to the desire to take music beyond KS3. It is now important to look at the contradictory side of this, and study why students may not take GCSE music.

Why might students not choose GCSE music?

Although all students in the focus group were GCSE music students, it is important that their place as educational citizens is taken into account; that is, the impact of their life outside of the music classroom, including their

awareness of their peers' attitudes and educational experiences, and how this may influence their decision not to take music at GCSE. By reflecting upon this, some insight may be gathered as to the reasons behind not simply why students opt for other subjects, but why they may be actively put off opting for music.

- Teacher and pupil attitudes towards music as a subject at KS3.

The focus group students reported that the curriculum at KS3 was not suitably adaptable for those who were not as musically able; one student stated that on occasion 'it was as if they (the teachers) were just waiting for those 3 years to go so they could just teach the ones who knew music like they weren't trying to get them involved they were just doing it 'cos they have to.'

Perhaps it is the case that, although not made explicit within the interview, this teacher attitude may have a negative effect on pupils' attitudes to music. Early on in the interview, the students said that one of the factors they did not enjoy about music at KS3 was other students in the class misbehaving:

The people who weren't musical or didn't enjoy it kind of may have disrupted the lessons a lot...also because I knew music I found it easy because when you're good at something it makes you like it more.

The last part of this statement is particularly interesting and links to motivation and self-perception, and raises the question of what makes music enjoyable at KS3? Is it curriculum content and/or ability, and to what extent do these factors have on raising motivation, not just within the lessons themselves, but on the subsequent option-taking process? It could be argued that, at least from the most recent quotation above, that ability is essential in order to get the most out of lessons. However, from another perspective, it surely the teacher's role to assure that all children are capable of partaking in the lesson and feeling they have the potential to develop, whatever their musical ability? Related to the issue of the need for differentiation, one student made the following observation:

I think it's very difficult because it's not set at KS3, it is mixed ability. They can't teach people who are good at music and are trying, while still make people who aren't going to choose it, and know they are not going to choose it, but still make it fun for them. So you've got people...it's always either aimed too high for people or aimed too low. It's very difficult to get it in the right balance for everyone.

Perhaps, as stated earlier, this lack of differentiation may lead to boredom and to a lack of interest for some children, resulting in the aforementioned poor behaviour displayed by some students.

- Pupils' perceptions of music as a subject at GCSE.

Perceptions of music at GCSE and what it may entail is an issue that came up in the interview when students were asked to reflect upon why numbers for music were lower than in other subjects. There is the chance that the possible lack of differentiation at KS3 mentioned above, leading to some children becoming disengaged from music, may encourage ideas amongst students that music is only for those who are 'musical' and able at the subject. This divide and status of music as a specialist, or elitist, subject, is worth considering. Furthermore, the focus group students stated that the perception of subject knowledge requirements for music GCSE may be more off-putting to fellow students than in other optional subjects. As one student said:

I think that it's that art and drama, well anyone can do art, anyone can paint to a certain level, but with music you have to have some knowledge and that's what puts them off.

Another student commented that 'for music you need to usually do quite a lot outside of school or during lunchtimes.' In relation to the influence of extra-curricular involvement, the students felt that this had quite a big influence on their desire to do music beyond KS3, although not much discussion came from this.

Overwhelmingly, however, when the question of whether or not KS3 music lessons prepared them fully for GCSE music, all students said 'No'. They commented that it was the out of school activities that led to the deeper

musical understanding and thus the ability to take GCSE music. Although not explicitly linked, perhaps too the instrumental lessons which all the students undertook contributed to the outside school knowledge-base.

This discussion suggests that children who do not take part in extra-curricular activities of different sorts, including musical activities in school as well as out of school, are at a disadvantage in terms of musical knowledge: it seems that music lessons at KS3, in the opinion of this group of students, are not enough on their own to close the perceived gap of knowledge between what is taught at KS3 and the requirements of the syllabus at KS4.

Aside from the perceptions of GCSE music and the debate about music for all, there is the possibility, too, that some children simply choose other subjects because they feel they would enjoy them more in terms of suitability to their skills; there does not have to be an automatic problem with music GCSE if some do not choose to take it. As one student stated:

Some people just decide from the straight off that they are not going to do music and you can't get them to do it. It's like PE: you know from like year 8 whether you really like PE and you're good at sport to go in and do PE for GCSE – it's similar to that.

Within this statement is an acceptance of the limitations of any subject to appeal to everyone, and urges one to consider the fact that people are different and have different tastes, likes and preferences. The issue being explored here is rather to ascertain whether or not maladaptive attitudes are being developed towards music as a subject at KS3 which would provoke concern as to the impact of these on GCSE uptake rates. Taking natural individual preferences into account, the next theme looks at what might be done to improve numbers taking GCSE music.

What can be done to improve GCSE uptake rates?

The students were quite forthcoming as to what might be done to improve numbers opting to take the subject.

- Change attitudes towards music at KS3.

Linked to the issues already discussed, the students suggested that in order to help students become less disruptive and possibly enjoy music more, there needs to be attention given to making lessons at KS3 more relevant to all. Although this was not explicitly linked to the desire to take GCSE music, there is mention later on in the interview that the students did not really engage in music at KS3. Although this was not enough to put them off from taking it as a subject, it appeared that their choice to take GCSE music was more to do with outside influences rather than class music, and this should be acknowledged. For those children who do not engage with much musical activity outside school and whose only experience of studying music is through class music, it is arguable that the lessons on their own should be enough to inspire them to enjoy music lessons and, for some at least, encourage them to carry on to KS4 where they might otherwise have not. One student made the following comment about improving KS3 music:

I'd say make it more about modern music. I mean, I know you have to learn about old times and all of that sort of music, but if they make it more modern, because that's what interested me at that age. I would have preferred those lessons if they had been about music now.

The link from this to GCSE music uptake may be somewhat spurious, but there should be the consideration that the purpose of KS3 music is not just to get people to take music at GCSE, but to develop a genuine interest and maximise potential in music with the help of a qualified teacher. The focus of this research is on GCSE uptake rates, but part of the discussions also link to the place of music in the school curriculum, and this is certainly relevant to consider at this point.

- Allow access to instrumental lessons for all children.

The first question of the interview focused on the importance to the group of instrumental lessons, and how these had helped have a positive influence on their musical training and development. In order to inspire

more children musically, and as a result of this possibly take GCSE music, some of the group suggested instrumental lessons as a way of building confidence and fostering the perception that they would be able to take GCSE because they have some instrumental skills. As one student said:

In year 9 when they started teaching people the guitar in their music lessons which I think will help persuade more people to do music because then they know they can play an instrument to a certain standard.

Another student commented on the necessity of inclusive practice:

I think that they should give everyone the opportunity of learning an instrument and that would have a big effect on people.

- The importance of the primary school in musical development.

Related to instrumental learning, some of the group felt that this should occur as soon as possible into formal schooling which would ease the transition into secondary school and will provide students with a good grounding in musical knowledge. Interestingly, the group's own experience of primary school music was questionable in terms of quality, and they all felt that they had to start from scratch in year 7; nevertheless, they still speculated that there was a need to encourage more musical activities in the primary years and this was evident in the last part of the interview when they were asked whether they had any final comments. One student stated that they thought that 'primary school is the big thing and that's what makes you change' to which the rest of the group uttered agreement. This was followed up by the observation that otherwise 'in year 7 there is too much catch up for teachers to do' and the belief that 'when you're young, you're willing to try everything and you're gonna do everything once when you're young'. Relating back to the comments about how extra-curricular involvement may have an impact on GCSE uptake, one student said that 'being part of an orchestra is not an embarrassment when you're young in primary', insinuating that it may be exactly that once students get to secondary school and the development of identity at adolescence becomes a key feature of this age,

and the concern of how one looks to others, particularly one's peer group, becomes a key aspect at this time.

Is there a need to improve GCSE uptake rates?

The final part of the data analysis for the focus group requires the need to question the position upon which the research is based. That is, the research is primarily concerned with the perceived problem of GCSE uptake rates, but there is some emphasis within the focus group, as there has been within other sample groups in the study, that there should not be an assumption that fewer numbers taking GCSE music indicates a problem. This idea has already been touched on within the focus group data, but in some ways it seems appropriate that some attention is paid to this issue as a separate category at this point.

The data has indicated that the students in this group understand that music is not necessarily going to be the choice of everyone due to the basic differences between people and their likes, dislikes and abilities. The concern that children are being put off music because it is essentially seen as a subject only for those with extra knowledge that must be acquired outside of the classroom is the real issue, it seems, when discussing whether or not GCSE uptake rates really matter. When the group was asked 'do you think anyone can do GCSE music?' there were some interesting responses. One of the criteria with which the students attributed potential success in music was determination to succeed and liking the subject. As one student said:

To be able to do it you need to enjoy it and have that kind of flare like you know what you're talking about...if a person came in who wasn't completely interested in music they wouldn't be able to get interested in it 'cos they don't like it.

However, there was a rather lengthy and eloquent comment regarding the belief by one student that music is to an extent different from other subjects in that some people do seem to have a 'gift' for the subject and perhaps find it appeals to them more than others who may struggle to fulfil the requirements of the GCSE course:

He (my brother) really wasn't very good at it (music) and there was no way he could do it. I think there are always people who just aren't talented at music and even if there were less people doing the subject at GCSE but...are going to be good at it, I would say it is better to have fewer people who are better at it than more people who are less good at it.

The students were then asked about their opinion of the BTec in music, which equates to two GCSE qualifications, and is seen as a more vocational route, and perhaps more accessible to a greater number of students. Although a couple of the students acknowledged the place of BTec in school music, they did not think that it should replace GCSE, and that 'we should really concentrate on getting the numbers for GCSE up'. The latter comment was made with a view to informing students at KS3 what GCSE music entails and that it might be a suitable option for some who may not think of themselves as able. This idea was referred to earlier in the interview; one student suggested that a way to get students to take GCSE music may be to reassure them of the content of the subject and that they can play to their strengths, either through instrumental skills or, if these are not strong, through composition using computer software for support. Taking the perceived mystery out of the content of GCSE music, and informing students of what it entails whilst in KS3 may help recruit more to take the subject.

The results of the focus group allowed the issues surrounding GCSE music uptake rates to be explored in some depth. Although there are disadvantages associated with qualitative data collection and analysis of this kind, it should not be dismissed as another alternative way to gather insight into people's perceptions and opinions. Researchers must be mindful that there is potentially a large amount of subjectivity or other influential factors when using this method in research, but the results may inform other data; although not generalisable in nature, the comments put forward and discussed as part of this focus group will form part of the discussion to come.

Before moving on to discuss all the findings in the discussion, and linking these to the literature, it may be helpful to provide an overall summary of the results and in which way the data triangulates or otherwise. It is hoped that by doing this there will be an added sense of clarity and understanding of all the data, and which aspects are particularly worthy of discussion and attention.

Summary of the Data.

The data analysed and presented in this chapter has given a large amount of material with which to work. Part of the challenge at this point in the study is to decipher the main points which have arisen across all the data, with particular reference to the KS3 data, and how these might be best discussed and linked to the literature. The summary will be presented in terms of the main themes linked to GCSE take-up, and all relevant data will be included: this will in turn provide the basis for the discussion to follow. The main themes are: the desire to do music for a job; students' perceptions of their musical ability; enjoyment and value of class music at KS3; the influence of instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities; and a reflection on what might be done to improve GCSE take-up rates.

- **The link between the desire to do music for a job and GCSE take-up.**

The one factor which emerged as being the most influential in the decision to take GCSE music in the KS3 quantitative data was the desire to 'do music for a job'. With regards to why this may be, it could be that the perception of it as being useful in the jobs market is low, and only useful if a career in music is desired. That is, the value of music as a subject in terms of future worth is only seen by a limited number of individuals who then see a purpose to taking GCSE music; as this factor provided the highest correlation above enjoyment of class music, for example, it could be said that the extrinsic need for music education is greater than the intrinsic pleasure of

studying it for its own sake. Of course, it is rarely as simplistic as this, and to isolate this factor as uninfluenced by the others to be discussed would be incorrect; levels of enjoyment of the subject and the perception of ability required to do music for a job, for example, may also be linked with the desire to do music for a job. However, part of the process involved in this data analysis is, to a certain extent, to identify the influential factors individually and to try and ascertain *to what extent* they, on their own and in conjunction with others, may have an influence on the desire to continue with formal music post-KS3. In this way, therefore, it is necessary to look first at each influential factor which has come from the data: the discussion as to the link between all of them will come more in the next chapter.

In terms of the other data, and whether it supports the KS3 findings in this area, there was some triangulation evident. Within the qualitative data for KS3, one of the emergent themes was the link between wanting to do GCSE music and seeing it as a route to employment, and thus holding future worth. The KS4 quantitative data supported this to a degree, although the desire to do music for a job did not feature as the main justification; being good at music was the foremost reason cited, although 'I wanted a career in music' did feature as the second highest reason together with 'KS3 music lessons were fun'. In some respects, it may be more useful to see this as a form of triangulation; although music for a job was not the most influential factor for choosing music, the findings within this data set did not in any way contradict the KS3 data and this is perhaps the most important aspect to consider. The KS4 qualitative data did not provide any further insight in this factor, although the BMus and PGCE quantitative data followed exactly the same pattern as that of the KS4 and A level: students within this group cited the primary reason for taking GCSE music as 'I was good at music' with 'I wanted to do music for a career' as second: both these factors were also mentioned within the BMus and PGCE qualitative data. The focus group data did not yield any results in terms of future careers.

It seems, therefore, that the findings within the KS3 data relating to the link between a career in music and opting for GCSE are supported across most of the data sets; where it is not cited as being important, it is not cited at all, and the lack of contradiction is, as already mentioned, arguably as important as the lack of reference.

- **The link between students' perceptions of their musical ability and GCSE take-up.**

Perceptions of what music GCSE entails, and the subsequent impact of those perceptions on take-up rates, are worthy of discussion at this point, and will help to inform the other aspects of the summary to come.

The belief in one's musical skills and abilities is not necessarily something which originates from the formal school music classroom, but may be born from many influencing factors, such as family and peer opinion as well as the concept of musicality that may be portrayed in the media. That is, involvement in formal musical activities and training in the classical western musical tradition is often portrayed as being a forum only for the 'talented', whereas by contrast popular music is commonly regarded as accessible to all. This is perhaps borne out by the fact that nearly all of the participants in the KS3 sample responded positively to being asked whether they enjoyed listening to music at home, and liking classical music was much less prevalent than liking popular music. As GCSE is a route into formal music education after KS3, it may be that this is perceived as requiring particular skills and talents and is therefore preclusive of the majority of children who do not have formal training in music outside of the classroom, for example in instrumental skills. The possibility that such perceptions are putting children off taking music GCSE needs exploring and has great implications.

It was found within the KS3 quantitative data that a positive self-perception of musicality was linked to the desire to take GCSE music, although trying to discern in what capacity was difficult. That is, this group did not perceive that you needed to play an instrument really well to do

GCSE music and, perhaps related to this, the majority of participants felt that anyone could do GCSE music if they tried hard enough, not just the ones who wanted to take GCSE music. This is encouraging in the sense that they were not being put off taking GCSE music due to a perceived lack of ability or need to play an instrument. However, the qualitative data did not support this, and many students cited their perceptions of a lack of musicality and ability to play an instrument as being part of the reason why they would not take GCSE music. These results represent a contradiction; in one respect, students feel that anyone can do music if they try hard enough, but when asked to expand on the reasons why they would not want to study the subject further, ability is stated as one of the key off-putting factors. Related to this, the quantitative data in the KS4 and A-Level and BMus and PGCE groups stated that the main reason that they took GCSE music was because they felt that they were 'good at music'. *Why* they felt this is important to understand: instrumental learning could be seen as a key factor in this, as nearly all of the participants in these two sample groups learned to play an instrument, and this factor was more influential than KS3 class music in their decision to take GCSE music. The focus group also stated instrumental learning as an important element in their decision to take GCSE, and also commented that class music did not prepare them at all, bearing in mind the very small sample in this group. So, in summary, what picture is emerging about perceptions of ability? The KS3 data is somewhat contradictory, as has been discussed, in that the students' instinctive beliefs from the quantitative data suggests that music GCSE is not beyond them but conversely they believe that their perceived musicality and ability would be an issue to overcome in reality.

Looking across all the data, then, it might be surmised that, although GCSE music is perceived by KS3 students as accessible to all in theory, in practice it is more to do with the students having the *motivation* needed to put in the (perceived) necessary work in order to feel able to succeed at GCSE music; the students may not feel that they need to play an instrument

really well to do GCSE music, although there may still be the perception that it would require a lot more effort outside of the classroom than for other subjects such as art or drama, as suggested by the BMus and PGCE qualitative data, and the focus group data. Furthermore, if the perceived effort required is an aspect in option choices, then this could lead to various speculations related to how self-efficacy of musical ability might affect motivation for formal study; it could be, for example, that some students are so concerned with looking a failure in front of peers who are seen as 'more musical', whether by themselves or by teaching staff, that they would rather not risk taking the subject at all than open themselves up to possible feelings of inadequacy. Perhaps, then, the issue with GCSE music uptake rates may have as much to do with intrinsic motivation as extrinsic motivation, and teachers may only be able to do so much in influencing this: teachers' awareness of this issue, however, is surely an advantage in helping to change students' perceptions and could well make a difference to numbers opting to take the subject.

- **Enjoyment and value of class music at KS3 and GCSE take-up.**

Within this section, the impact of the enjoyment of class music lessons, and the importance and value attached to music lessons in school on potential take-up at GCSE will be studied; equally important is to study the impact of *not* enjoying class music. That is, what are the factors related to classroom music lessons which may put children off opting to take GCSE? Again, it is important to recognise that this factor is not mutually exclusive from the others, but will aid the clarity of the discussion to explore this issue in its own right.

The KS3 quantitative data across all schools suggest that the enjoyment and value attached to music lessons at KS3 do have a positive correlation on the wish to opt for GCSE music, which is unsurprising in a sense, but it is important to look at *why* the lessons are enjoyed, and this might encompass many secondary factors. There were interesting results

within and between schools which suggest that enjoyment of class music may not be directly linked to the desire to take GCSE music; for now, however, the commonalities and/or discrepancies across all schools at KS3 and the other data will be studied.

The qualitative KS3 data supported the quantitative data, although not so much in terms of class music enjoyment; when asked why they might want to take GCSE, a general love of music was cited rather than because of class music specifically. The quantitative data at KS4 supported the idea that students enjoyed music at KS3, but it was not portrayed as the major impact on their decision; enjoying lessons at school was a part of the students' experiences, and overall these seemed to be positive, but other factors were of equal or greater influence than this. The KS4 qualitative data suggested a general love of music was inspirational, rather than class music lessons per se, and the BMus and PGCE data included enjoyment of class music as a part of their inspiration to take music, but not as the overriding influence; wanting to take music for a job and being good at music were seen as being more important to this latter group. Nevertheless, the importance of music in schools was seen as highly important to this group; although enjoyment of the lessons was not experienced by all, a great majority did think that music should feature in the National Curriculum, demonstrating a great value being placed on musical learning for school children. The focus group did discuss music lessons at KS3, but enjoyment of lessons did not come over as the main impact; if anything, this seemed to be one of the least popular reasons why they took the subject. Although this was only a sample of 6 students, it is still worth mentioning that, for this group at least, other influences were certainly more influential in their decision than class music.

So across all schools at KS3 and KS4 and A Level, enjoyment of class music did seem to make a mark on the students' decision making, and this is supported by most of the other data apart from the BMus/PGCE sample and focus group. However, it was not the foremost reason even in the other data sets, and other factors were more prevalent. Between all schools there were

more stark differences, and in some there was no statistical significance between wanting to take GCSE music and enjoying lessons; in three schools, for example, there was a high level of overall pupil enjoyment of music lessons, but this was not enough to tempt them to take GCSE music; in another three schools, however, overall pupil enjoyment was low yet there was a statistical significance between enjoyment and wanting to take GCSE music. What this suggests is that although in some schools, enjoyment of class music is influential, it cannot be assumed to be an influence in students' decision-making process. The discussion will focus further on this, and discuss the aims of music education in relation to these results: that is, should music educators be aiming for greater uptake rates in music, whether the majority are enjoying their lessons or not? The question of what is really important will be discussed.

Having compared the findings across all data and made some headway into understanding the extent that class music has an influence on the desire to take GCSE music, it is now necessary to summarise *what* students did or did not enjoy about music lessons across all the data.

What do students enjoy about KS3 music lessons?

- Practical music-making and engagement (performing, composing and listening).

Within the KS3 quantitative data, there was a statistically significant correlation between wanting to take GCSE music and enjoying the practical aspects of music-making, including performing and composing music. Although the statements from which this data was obtained did not explicitly state whether or not music-making or performing took place in school or out of school, the qualitative KS3 data supports the idea that the children enjoyed the practical aspects of KS3 lessons the most. The KS4 and A Level and BMus and PGCE qualitative responses also support this idea; the practical aspect of KS3 lessons was what the students had most enjoyed and listening to music was part of the enjoyment. The focus group had

suggested possible improvements for KS3 music, and did not specifically mention their enjoyment of class music. So, in summary, although enjoyment of class music lessons per se did not feature as a main indicator of potential GCSE uptake, the element within class music which was most inspiring across most of the data was the ability to *do* music and be interactive: to play the instruments, work within groups and compose music.

- Good teaching

Presumably, participants would consider that to have lessons which included their preferred style of learning in terms of practical music-making would be tantamount to good teaching. This is not stated as such within the KS3 qualitative data, although the alternative, 'boring' lessons were mentioned as being off-putting within KS3 lessons, perhaps suggesting this conversely. Within the BMus and PGCE data, however, the importance of good teaching, not only on enjoyment of lessons at KS3, but also in order to encourage more students to take GCSE, was referred to throughout the data. The students within this sample strongly disagreed with the notion that 'it didn't matter if music at KS3 was taught well as long as the teacher was nice' and other data within this questionnaire supported this idea. Encouragement from the teacher was also cited as part of good teaching.

What do students not enjoy about KS3 music?

- Quality of teaching/student behaviour.

The two aspects 'quality of teaching' and 'bad behaviour' has been linked, as it is difficult to disentangle these two aspects following analysis of the data. Certainly enjoyment of class music was linked to the desire to take GCSE music within the quantitative data at some level, and a lack of enjoyment of class music, perhaps due in part to teaching and related issues, may be partially responsible for some not opting to take music. The main theme to emerge within the qualitative data was that of poor behaviour from peers; classroom management was deemed to be a negative aspect of KS3

music across all the qualitative data sets, including the focus group. Perhaps in this respect, better teaching methods may help; differentiation was cited as an issue for concern within the BMus and PGCE group and the focus group, and may be linked to poor behaviour, although this is only speculative. It must be noted that other factors, such as parental attitudes to music as a subject may also have an impact, although this was only explored very tentatively. The BMus and PGCE group held concerns that parental attitudes and fellow teaching staff may have influential attitudes governing the place of music as a worthy subject post KS3, which in turn may affect students' attitudes towards the subject, but other than this, the reason why student behaviour is poor in music, according to the opinions of the participants in this study, is a matter for reflection and perhaps further study. The possibility that it may link to perceptions of ability and issues related to motivation is also possible; students with maladaptive motivation may feel vulnerable to the practical aspect of music lessons, and may rebel against the risk of 'looking silly' in front of classmates by misbehaving.

The influence of instrumental lessons and other extra-curricular activities on the desire to take GCSE music.

- Instrumental lessons.

Within the KS3 quantitative data, playing an instrument correlated the most with the desire to take GCSE music against all other extra-curricular activities. Although useful as raw data, it also helps to try and understand why this is so from the qualitative data. The idea that children perceive instrumental skills as helpful to meeting the GCSE music criteria has already been discussed, but in terms of enjoyment of music lessons and the general sense of fulfilment that learning to play an instrument can bring, the qualitative data can be useful in finding out more. In terms of enjoyment of class music lessons at KS3, 'playing the instruments' and performing were main themes across all data sets, although actually learning to play an instrument was not specifically referred to as much; playing an instrument

was seen as more important in relation to perceptions of the need for this as part of the skill set for GCSE music rather than in terms of it directly leading to the desire to take GCSE.

Nevertheless, the ability to play an instrument to some level of ability is a necessary prerequisite to being part of most extra-curricular musical activities, and so the link between these two factors must be acknowledged; that is, if the data suggests that enjoyment of such activities are an influential part of children's wish to take music further, then instrumental learning cannot be ignored as part of this. Indeed, all but two of the KS4 and A-Level group stated they were learning to play an instrument which does suggest that it is a strong likelihood that this is a part of the profile of a GCSE music student; whether this is due to the perception of need or pure enjoyment, or a combination of the two, is difficult to ascertain in this study and perhaps an area for further research. Additionally, the quantitative data in the BMus and PGCE group showed that the instrumental teacher had a very strongly positive impact on their musical development, and suggests that the relationship between instrumental teacher and student, as well as learning the instrument itself, and the feelings of self-efficacy that come with this, may also both be influential factors in the desire to take GCSE music.

The focus group also discussed the influence of instrumental lessons at some length. Although much of their comments were associated with the need to improve students' perceptions of their own ability in order to equip them with the necessary skills by learning an instrument, there was still the general feeling that instrumental skills were important in their musical development, and certainly did assist in the decision-making process; the belief within this group was that instrumental lessons should start in primary school to have the greatest impact on musical development.

- Extra-curricular activities.

One of the aims of the research is to try and separate the influence of class music lessons and extra-curricular musical activities, in order to decipher the

impact of these factors on uptake rates independently. At the same time, it is also important to recognise the interrelated nature and influences of a child's holistic musical experiences and the social context within which they live. At KS3, there was a statistical significance between wanting to take GCSE music and being involved in extra-curricular activities (separate to instrumental lessons). In-school activities at KS3 seemed to have more of an influence than out of school activities on the desire to take GCSE music, although all were statistically significant to a degree, suggesting that in-school musical participation could well be an important factor in encouraging children to take music further. The reasons for this, although perhaps an area for further research, could be associated with enjoyment of the activity for its own sake and possibly allowing the children to build up their perceptions of themselves as musicians and feeling 'qualified' to take GCSE music, as discussed previously. At KS4 and A-Level, extra-curricular involvement was found to be an element of their musical lives, although not as much of an influence as the involvement in instrumental learning. For the BMus and PGCE music group, the extra-curricular musical activities were reported as being a positive part of their music education, and was cited as the third most popular reason to take GCSE music; by contrast, the KS4 and A-Level group did not report as positive a response, and listed extra-curricular activities as a less influential reason than other factors.

An important part of analysing and summarising data, though, is to observe the overall picture and not get too caught up in the minutiae of the figures, important as they can be in the initial stages of determining key information. The overall picture of extra-curricular music in schools and its influence on GCSE uptake rates is that it seems to play an influential part to an extent, and is perceived positively on the whole, but not, seemingly, as much as instrumental learning; although the latter enables the ability to take part in the extra-curricular activities, either in school or out of school, it is the learning of the instrument that appears to have the most influence on take-up.

What can be done to improve numbers taking GCSE?

Although this question did not feature in the KS3 or KS4 and A-Level questionnaires, the data retrieved from the BMus and PGCE sample and focus groups yielded interesting data pertaining to this, and will provide useful considerations regarding the implications of the issues raised in this research.

Related to the perceived relevance of music GCSE to the jobs market there was little suggested in terms of what could be done to improve numbers. However, students put forward the notion that making the subject generally more relevant to children's everyday lives would help maintain an interest in studying music; as part of this, the relevance of transferable skills arising from the study of music might be communicated. Perhaps teachers need to market GCSE music as a subject which can offer subject knowledge and enjoyment, but also social, emotional and cognitive benefits which may transfer to the workplace; this issue is also highly relevant to the debate into the place of music in schools for all children within compulsory education, and not just those who choose to take it beyond that stage.

A key theme in the suggestions as to how to improve take-up at GCSE was associated with accessibility; ensuring that all children have the capacity and confidence to take GCSE music if they so wish. This is a simplistic statement, and there are invariably many factors to consider as part of this. For example, although the ability to play an instrument really well is not regarded by KS3 students as a pre-requisite to taking GCSE music, there is still a strong sense across the data that instrumental lessons are an important part of continuing musical education and associated confidence. The focus group felt that instrumental lessons should be started in primary school to allow the greatest development, as did the BMus and PGCE group who were most positively influenced by their instrumental teachers. Although financial constraints associated with instrumental lessons were not mentioned within the data, it would seem that this is certainly related; if all children should be

equipped with the capability and confidence to take GCSE music, and instrumental lessons are an important, if not essential, part of this, then no child should be excluded from this on financial grounds.

Part of the issue of accessibility, according to the data, is also bound up with teaching styles, and ensuring that all children are catered for at the right level for them; participants within the focus group and BMus and PGCE group felt that differentiation, and perhaps even streaming of music lessons, may assist in giving all children a sense that they were musically able, and that GCSE music is not necessarily just for those regarded as talented. The vast majority of KS3 students did believe that GCSE music could be achieved as long as effort was involved, but it appears that the effort needed may be too much for them to opt for it above other subjects; perhaps if it was felt that music was attainable by all, particularly taking into account the issue about instrumental lessons as part of this, then levels of motivation to take GCSE may be increased.

Another suggestion for improving take-up rates across the BMus and PGCE and focus groups was to change attitudes towards GCSE music as a worthwhile qualification, linked very much to accessibility and the perception of music as useful in the jobs market. That is, music should be taken seriously as a subject in its own right, as well as for its transferable skills, by students, teachers and parents. Although in practice this may be a difficult change to achieve, it is again worth being aware of how negative attitudes towards the subject might affect option choices, and considering a pro-active way in which to reach and inform the children who are listening to, and being influenced by, such negativity. Also worth considering is the potential difference between attitudes towards music as a 'useful' subject for the jobs market and other optional subjects such as art, drama and sport: are the distinct differences in perceptions between the subjects, and what are the effects of these?

At this point, it is also worth repeating the fact that music is a subject in which some students have a greater interest than others, and may devote a

great deal of time to partaking in musical activities outside of school time; some also have a 'talent' and demonstrate great skill, which should also be positively acknowledged: others students would find the option of GCSE music less enticing due to having a particular affinity towards and/or ability in art, for example, and would thus understandably opt for this over and above music. The issue being explored is not necessarily the need to try and recruit more students to take music for the sake of it, rather to identify any factors which are deterring children from opting to take music that otherwise may be capable and gain a great deal of satisfaction from it: the aim is to try and understand the possible detrimental influences on children which deter them for opting for music, whether real or perceived, and seek to explore and possibly change these to give all children who enjoy and want to take GCSE music the resources, confidence and motivation to do so.

At the end of this chapter, there are several key factors which have arisen from the data analysis which will inform the discussion. Following an introduction revisiting the main research questions, the results explored within this chapter will be discussed with reference to the literature and how this may inform teachers, pupils, parents and policy-makers.

Chapter 4: Discussion

Introduction to the Discussion

Having analysed the data, it is now necessary to relate the findings to the literature, review how this research relates to the wider body of knowledge and evaluate its implications. It may also be useful at this point to outline the research objectives again as a reminder of what is being explored and why.

This study is primarily concerned with exploring the reasons why GCSE music recruits relatively low numbers in comparison to other optional subjects such as art or drama. It is a complex issue, particularly as music is a pastime enjoyed by practically all students in some capacity outside of school, and thus has a wide social and cultural basis for exploration; the many influential factors which may affect students' decisions to take music GCSE may thus be far-ranging and certainly not confined to the influences of school music. Due to the importance of recognising the impact of children's musical lives on their educational experiences and choices, this research attempts to reflect upon the musical identities of students as people, not just as educational consumers.

There is some research across the literature which addresses the issue of GCSE uptake rates, although much of this is based on speculation rather than empirical research. Since the commencement of this thesis, further research has been published which has recognised this:

In summary, there is useful but limited empirical evidence on subject choices regarding music...these studies are often undertheorised, small-scale or conjectural. While a plethora of possible reasons (for low GCSE uptake) have been advanced, there is little evidence of explanations for the roles they play and how they may interact (Lamont and Maton, 2008: 269).

Lamont and Maton undertook as part of this research an empirical investigation into the lower uptake rates of music compared to other subjects, the findings from which will be discussed alongside those from the current study. Additionally, the most recent inspection into music in schools by

Ofsted, published in February 2009 following a three year inspection process, highlights that 'entries for GCSE music remain relatively low compared to other GCSE subjects', (Ofsted, 2009: 23) and makes suggestions as to the reasons for this, including school-based issues and why 'the students in these (KS3) lessons made less progress overall in KS3 than in any other key stages' (ibid.: 23). This document and its findings will also be acknowledged throughout the discussion.

Another aim of the research, aside from studying the different factors which may affect GCSE uptake rates, is to ascertain to how much of a degree comparatively lower uptake rates are in fact a problem. There is an assumption across much of the research cited throughout the thesis so far, whether speculative or empirical, that it is a problem, and a sign that something must be wrong with school music, yet there is a lack of attention towards other possible explanations which are less subject-orientated. For example, if young people are making an informed decision which accurately and fairly reflects their preference for another subject, without this denoting an automatic disdain for music or something being intrinsically wrong with music teaching and learning, then this should also be considered: both possibilities will be explored as part of the discussion. A positive and fulfilling music education at KS3 may not automatically lead to the desire to take GCSE music, as the results from this study suggest, and lower uptake rates should not necessarily indicate a problem with KS3 music, lack of opportunities or incorrect perceptions. Related to this is the debate regarding the purposes of music in the school curriculum; whether school music is seen primarily as the preparation for GCSE and beyond, as part of an enriching and varied education which contributes to personal development and offers transferable effects, or as a mixture of all and more besides.

In terms of structure, then, the discussion will begin by exploring the factors which seem to be the most influential in children's desire whether or not to take GCSE music according to the results in this study and in relation

to the literature. These are: the desire to do music for a job; perceptions of musical ability and of the requirements of GCSE music as a qualification; instrumental lessons and extra-curricular involvement; and enjoyment and value attached to music lessons, including what constitutes 'good' music teaching. Occasionally, there may be some overlap, as the factors are not mutually exclusive.

Bearing these factors in mind, the discussion will then explore the question of how much of a problem the issue of GCSE uptake rates is, based on the findings of this research and other research across the literature: the wider implications of this will be discussed as part of this section, and will provide the basis for the final part of the discussion which will focus on the place of music in the school curriculum. That is, the opinion that music may be removed from the curriculum as a result of lower uptake rates suggests that school music is for the obtaining of formal qualifications and not much else. However, compulsory music education is for some as much about developing an aesthetic appreciation for music and the gaining of other musical, social and cognitive skills, as it is about recruiting more to take GCSE as an end in itself.

Discussion

Factors affecting GCSE uptake rates.

The most recent research has indicated that GCSE music uptake rates are low compared to other optional subjects (Lamont and Maton, 2008; Ofsted, 2009). The reasons why this might be so are explored empirically in the former study, and suggestions put forward as to why this issue is still prevalent after so many years of music lagging behind other subjects in terms of uptake rates. Other studies have attempted to do the same, to a greater or lesser extent, (Bray, 2000; Harland, 2000; Lamont *et al.*, 2003) and collectively can help to form a picture suggesting specific factors which affect music uptakes rates, the extent of the influence of these and what, if any, action might be taken to try and reduce the effect of these factors if desirable and appropriate. Before discussing to what extent music uptakes do indicate a problem to be solved, it is necessary to highlight and discuss the factors found to be prevalent in children's decision-making process in this study alongside the aforementioned literature. It must be remembered at this point that this study encompassed the speculative views of KS3 children as to why they might take GCSE music, and the retrospective opinions of those who had already selected GCSE music: both perspectives will hopefully provide a rich and varied basis for discussion.

GCSE music uptake rates and the desire to do music for a job.

The quantitative results from the KS3 sample in this study showed that the most statistically significant factor linked to the desire to take GCSE music was whether or not the students might want to do music for a job. Moreover, when between-schools analysis was undertaken, it was observed that in every school this was a factor, and the most statistically significant factor in every school but two. Additionally, it was significantly more so than other factors, such as enjoyment of lessons and enjoying practical music, for example, when a confidence interval was applied. This finding was also

supported to varying degrees across most of the other data sets, and wanting to have a career in music was the second highest reason why GCSE, A-level, PGCE and BMus students chose to take GCSE (perceiving themselves as good at music was the first reason). Collectively, this is a result which is in some ways surprising, as this factor has not been discussed much across the literature in terms of having a particularly large influence on music uptake rates. Lamont *et al.* (2003) do cite it as one of the influential reasons why the children in their study may opt to take music GCSE, but not above and beyond other issues such as perceptions of skills needed, for example. The more recent Ofsted report (2009) highlights the link more explicitly, and raises the issue of music as a career in relation to the perceived value of music, and the influence of parents in this:

Pupils often commented that their parents did not see why they should continue with music if they were not going to follow a career in music. Perceptions about the value of music post-14 need to be changed so that it is not just seen as a narrow route to a musical career (Ofsted, 2009: 53).

In relation to this, the research of Button (2006), when discussing the influence of gender on KS3 pupils' perceptions of music, found that 'parents of male pupils may not perceive music in terms of a career or in terms of their sons' aesthetic growth and emotional development' (p. 427). This was in contrast to the parents of female pupils:

Parents of female pupils appear to view music as an important factor in facilitating and enriching their daughters' artistic growth. This might account, in part, for the larger number of female pupils who opt for music at GCSE level (*ibid.*: 427).

It is worth mentioning at this point that the most recent statistics show that this gender pattern has shifted, with slightly more boys than girls taking GCSE music in 2008 (Ofsted, 2009). However, the general attitudes from parents towards their children regarding option choices and careers could be very important. Although the current study did not explore parents' attitudes to music as a qualification, as it was not expected that careers and option choices in music would be so strongly linked, this may have

contributed to the results in part, and could be worthy of further research. That is, if the desire to do GCSE music largely hinges on whether or not it is perceived as useful for the future jobs market, and future research supports the literature cited, that parents' attitudes might be a key factor in this, then it could be that involving parents more in understanding the role of music in the curriculum and what it can offer in terms of transferable skills to the future jobs market, and not just for a career in music, could be very beneficial. This is not to say that parents' attitudes to careers are the sole influence on children's perspectives here; there is surely as much of a need to educate the children themselves as to what music might offer as a subject, both in terms of subject-specific knowledge and transferable skills, the latter potentially highly regarded by many future employers. The National Curriculum for music (2007), for example, states the following as part of its importance statement:

Music can influence pupils' development in and out of school by fostering personal development and maturity...and increasing pupils' ability to work with others in a group context. Music learning develops pupils' critical skills: their ability to listen, to appreciate a wide variety of music...it also increases self-discipline, creativity, aesthetic sensitivity and fulfilment (QCA, 2007: 179).

This importance statement also writes of the subject-specific gains, but it is worth highlighting that the current curriculum aims to foster many transferable skills, as well as developing musical competences. It is worth considering that the large majority of children, if any at all, will not have reflected upon how relevant music is to the jobs market in terms of the personal, social and cognitive skills which develop from its study, and perceive, as in the current study, that GCSE music is useful only if a career in music is desired. Parents, too, may hold a similar opinion and transfer this view to their children (Ofsted, 2009). Furthermore, the issue could be that teachers, although some may be very much aware of the transferable skills which arise from studying music, need to market this side of music education more from an early stage in order to help students, and possibly their parents, to realise the far-reaching effects of a music education; that

music provides many skills which future employers may find attractive. In relation to other optional subjects' uptake rates, and why these may be higher than that of music, it is worth considering by contrast whether or not young people, parents and teachers view more opportunities leading from the study of these subjects. That is, art and drama may recruit more students as individuals perceive more obvious links to future careers, for example, graphic design, acting and work in different aspects of the media. Children may also see PE as offering more potentiality for future careers, and thus more options. These suggestions, however, are speculative and worthy of further investigation and research.

Returning to the idea of marketing music as a subject at GCSE and communicating what it can offer, how might such marketing be achieved in practice? To suggest to teachers that they need to adopt an almost business-like approach to 'selling' their subject at the end of KS3 could well be met with opposition; after all, music should surely be regarded as a subject very much worthy in its own right, and not be reduced to simply being viewed as an extension of personal and social education or citizenship only to increase generic skills. As Mills (1998b) and Plummeridge (2001) argue, research suggests that music does appear to have its transferable effects in terms of cognitive and social benefits, but must also be seen as promoting musical excellence and educational worth as a subject to be taken seriously within the curriculum and as a prospect for GCSE. Within this appears to be a dichotomy: on the one hand, there seems to be the need to inform children and parents of the generic benefits that a qualification in music may offer to the jobs market, and to life skills in general, without on the other hand compromising the purposes and aims of a school music education by diminishing the need to focus on the development of musical skills as an equally, if not more, important facet of school music lessons.

Also, in terms of informing parents of the collective benefits of studying GCSE music, not only for future jobs, music-specific or otherwise, but also for the enjoyment and musical advancements which might be made

as a result of this choice, there needs to be the consideration of how this may be done without seeming patronising or in any way undermining of their roles as parents. It could be that parents are encouraged to become more involved in the music education of their children throughout the time they are engaged in compulsory music education from primary school until the end of KS3, and are thus able to witness first-hand how music may have a very positive impact on their child in different ways; invitations to end-of-term class performances, where possible and appropriate, for example, or even a music department newsletter sent home with *all* students on a regular basis, may strike the beginnings of greater communication with parents concerning what their children are learning in music, and the many benefits with which this provides them, both in school as a subject and for future jobs, whether music-based or not. This sort of communication, separate to and perhaps more appropriate than addressing such issues at other events such as parents' evenings, may pave the way for a greater mutual understanding between schools, parents and children, of the aims and justifications of music education and its many different facets. To attempt to reach only parents of children who have instrumental lessons or partake in extra-curricular involvement would not be enough: it is, one might argue, those parents and children who are the *least* inclined to be involved and engaged in music education, either in or out of school, who most need to be reached. This is not to say that this approach would automatically recruit more children to opt for music GCSE, but it would arguably be a step in the right direction in providing children and parents with the necessary information of which they may need to be informed, and of which they are not aware. Parents may reflect their own (possibly negative or indifferent) experiences of music education at school onto their children, and need to be fully and accurately informed, in an accessible and supportive way, of the true and wide-ranging benefits of a good music education in order to help their children make the right decisions for them as learners and individuals when making their option choices.

The findings relating to jobs and GCSE music uptake rates are important, in that they initiate a necessary forum for discussion as to why this might be and what might be done about it, but should not be viewed in isolation; a balanced response to the research question is needed, and other influential factors on option choices should be taken into account. Lamont and Maton (2008) make specific reference to this in relation to uptake rates and the jobs market:

It can be tempting to account for the low uptake of GCSE music solely in terms of its value in the occupational marketplace and to argue it has little vocational relevance or status among potential employers (cf. Bray, 2000). However, on its own this explanation fails to account for why the uptake rate of, for example, GCSE sport is double that of music (Lamont and Maton, 2008: 279).

This is an important point. The current study, although looking to explore factors which directly influence students' decisions relating to music GCSE uptake specifically, does not compare students' views of other subject choices at GCSE, and why they might opt for art, drama or sport, for example, above and beyond music; the findings in this study do represent the opinions of the participants involved, but need to be viewed in a wider context, as reminded by Lamont and Maton. The fact that wanting to do music for a job was the strongest positive correlation between this and the desire to take GCSE music is certainly worthy of discussion in its own right, but should not be taken out of context. Lamont and Maton argue the case that 'sport is not twice as valuable in the job market' (p.279) as music, and we should not, therefore, assume that job prospects are the deciding factor across all subject areas choices; they refer to the possibility that uptake rates are as much to do with the different perceptions towards sport in relation to the time and effort involved in achieving the qualification as they are to do with job relevance; that sport is regarded as more accessible to all, and not as an elite activity as may be the case with music. This idea fits in with the suggestion made earlier in the discussion, that the perceived opportunities for future job relevance in terms of skills are more obvious with a subject such as sport, and that its accessibility to students forms part of this

perception. Indeed, Lamont and Maton suggest that there is a certain duality on the effect on GCSE music uptake rates between the perceptions of job prospects resulting from opting for music GCSE and the perceived elitism associated with music in education generally:

The perceived investment of time and effort required to achieve in music is thus growing at the same time as the rewards to be gained from this investment may be diminishing, making music for many a *relatively* unattractive choice (ibid.: 279) (my italics).

These two factors, both associated with perceptions, may well impact upon each other. Bearing this in mind, the discussion will now turn to explore the concept of elitism in music education in relation to the findings in this study and across the literature, and the effects that this may have on GCSE uptake rates and students' motivation.

Perceptions of musical ability and the desire to do GCSE music: the influence of the concept of elitism in music education.

Self-perceptions pertaining to musicality can be difficult to measure; such a measurement relies, to a certain extent, on an agreement of what musicality is. Particularly for children, it may be a concept upon which they have never reflected, yet which may have some impact on decisions they make regarding their educational choices. So, what is musicality? Is it the ability to appreciate music as an art form, to enjoy its existence in life, or is it seen as more skill-based than this, only to be attributed to those who have specialist knowledge and ability? The results from this study show that nearly all of the 679 KS3 respondents enjoy listening to music at home: this demonstrates an overwhelming appreciation for music on some level.

However, there was a link in the KS3 data between the self-perception of individual musicality and wanting to do GCSE music. This finding suggests that, as a construct, musicality, or being musical enough, matters when it comes to option choices. This might prompt the consideration of determining which aspects of musicality children see as beyond them in educational terms. If they are able to enjoy and appreciate music at home, and this perhaps distinguishes music from other subjects which may not be

so readily accessible out of the classroom, then what is it, specifically, that children think about their own musicality, or lack of it, which deters them from taking GCSE music at the end of KS3? Much of the literature on the topic presents the need to acquire and maintain instrumental skills as being a core factor in children's perceptions of music GCSE as only fit for the more musically advanced (Bray, 2000; Wright, 2002; Lamont *et al.*, 2003; Lamont and Maton, 2008; Ofsted, 2009) and thus exclusive in terms of who can successfully complete the course.

The results from this study relating to this are interesting and present mixed feelings from the children in KS3. On the one hand, they do not seem to be put off taking music GCSE due to the perceived need to play an instrument really well, as explored in the closed-ended questions. In fact, the majority of children felt that anyone could do GCSE music if they tried hard enough, and thus seem to attribute the necessary qualities needed to take GCSE music more in terms of effort than attainment. This is surprising, based on much of the literature available on the topic, as it is in direct contrast to what has been found. Bray (2000), Wright (2002), Lamont *et al.* (2003), and Ofsted (2009) all report on the perceptions by students that instrumental skills are needed and desirable, and that it is a factor which deters students from taking the subject further, moving it into the realms of a choice only available to those who have a particular aptitude for the subject. Due to this, music is not therefore seen as a natural progression from KS3, and fosters an elitism which pervades the subject and leaves it open to criticism as not being available to all. This perception may come from teaching staff as well as students:

An over-emphasis on instrumental skills also contributed to lack of continuity in Key Stage 4. Music GCSE is not always seen as a natural extension to work in Key Stage 3 and the schools surveyed discouraged pupils, explicitly or implicitly, from taking GCSE if they did not have additional instrumental lessons or were not already an accomplished performer (Ofsted, 2009: 52).

This observation from Ofsted highlights the inspected schools' perceptions that students are expected to have attained a certain standard of

instrumental skills in order to be seen as suitable candidates for GCSE, and that there is a lack of progression from KS3 inherent in this expectation. Furthermore, the research of Lamont and Maton (2008) acknowledges more explicitly the idea that the 'time and effort to achieve in music' (p. 279) is influential in students not wanting to continue with music post-KS3, yet this concept is not supported by the KS3 quantitative results from this study: the majority of the students perceived that you did not need to play an instrument really well to take GCSE music. Yet it is also worth noting at this point that the qualitative responses from the KS3 students suggest that lack of instrumental skills *would* in fact be a detrimental influence in not choosing the subject and demonstrates mixed feelings from the participants. It seems, therefore, that it is not so much that students do not think of themselves as necessarily able, rather that they do not have the perceived motivation to do the extra work needed to take GCSE music, and such extra work is perhaps indicative of one of the greatest contrasts in perceptions to other subjects. It should also be highlighted that perceiving oneself as capable of a subject in terms of its skill-base is important to young people (Hallam, 2006): those in the study who had already opted for GCSE music cited being good at music as the main reason for having opted for it, above the desire to do it for a job. Such expectancy values attached to the perception of music GCSE may have important consequences for uptake rates; if those who have chosen it believe themselves to be good at music, in whatever guise that may be, and those who are yet to opt for it perceive that too much effort is involved above and beyond what would normally be required for a GCSE course, then this suggests collectively that self-efficacy is an important factor in uptake rates. Teachers' attitudes and the ethos of the institutional setting, as suggested by the BMus and PGCE students and focus group in this study and explored by Ofsted (2009), do arguably contribute to this, and underline the need for further research in this area as stated by Olsson (1997).

The next issue to be considered as part of this focus on the link between self-perception of musicality and GCSE uptake rates is that of what

can be done about it if it denotes a problem. That is, if children think that anyone can do GCSE music as long as they try hard enough, but perceive the effort involved in this is too much than should be reasonably expected, is there a strategy that might be useful in eliminating these perceptions? The first thing to consider leading on from this question is whether or not these said perceptions are accurate or not. It is thought that instrumental skills are needed to do well at GCSE, (Philpott, 2001; Wright 2002; Lamont *et al.*, 2003) however much it might be tempting to say that they are not in order to promote GCSE music as inclusive. If this is so, then children should feel that they are able to take GCSE music based on the lessons which they receive in school time, and Wright (2002) argues that this is simply not possible under the time and curriculum constraints faced by teachers. Although Wright's research is not large-scale enough to be considered generalisable, it still raises important questions about whether or not KS3, and indeed primary music before this, aptly prepares students for further study in music without the need for extra tuition. If instrumental lessons are required in order for children to be prepared for GCSE music, then they should be provided for all children, either in lesson time or out of it if necessary. Not to do this is akin to stating that children need to learn about how Bunsen burners operate for their practical science exam, but to deny them the necessary tuition and resources with which to achieve this objective. Additionally, there needs to be the recognition that to be of a certain standard on an instrument by the time that a child reaches the age at which they will choose GCSE music, the tuition will need to have begun some time before this. Furthermore, for all children to have access to instrumental tuition, perhaps from primary age as was suggested by the focus group in this study, there is the reasonable supposition that they will feel much more prepared to take on a further course of study in music as a result of this, and see it as a natural next step in their musical education, rather than a leap into the unknown. Regular and systematic instrumental tuition for all children would thus become a normal part of school music tuition, and the perceived effort involved in taking

GCSE music would be, one might suppose, considerably less than what it is currently. Of course there will still be a wide variety in ability levels reached by different students, as with skills needed in other subjects. The difference would be that the requirements of the subject are made known, met through the school curriculum, resulting in children who are well-prepared to cope with these and do the best that they can.

If, however, extra instrumental tuition is not considered necessary outside of the classroom to gain a good chance of success at GCSE, this needs to be made explicit to students and for teachers to be made aware of their implicit or explicit discouragement of their students' taking music as a result of this, and the potential impact of this on take up rates in music. It is difficult to ascertain, though, to what extent it is important for students to be able to access instrumental tuition; according to Cain (1989), Philpott (2001) and Wright (2002), it certainly seems the case that children will do better at GCSE from having extra tuition. This seems a reasonable conclusion, not only in the sense of the children being able to satisfy the performance part of the exam, but also in terms of the extra hours of tuition which would assist knowledge and understanding of the subject and surely put those who do have such extra tuition at an immediate advantage. So, to what extent, therefore, does receiving instrumental tuition have an impact on the desire to take GCSE music? It seems that although students in this study perceive that instrumental skills are not essential to take GCSE music, the effort needed, and the attitudes of teachers associated with this, may be off-putting. It will be helpful now to look more closely at this, and in particular at the profile of those who have opted to take GCSE, to see whether those children who undertake instrumental lessons are more likely to want to take GCSE music, both speculatively (KS3 students) and retrospectively (GCSE, A-Level, BMus and PGCE students). The impact of extra-curricular involvement and the effect of this on option choices will be also be discussed and related to the literature on the topic.

The link between instrumental lessons and extra-curricular involvement in music and the desire to take GCSE music.

Perceptions of what level of ability of instrumental skills are important; as has been discussed in the previous section, such perceptions may have an effect on whether or not GCSE music may be seen as attainable by students, or too much out of their musical league to be worth their while compared with other subjects. In actuality, though, how many students who play an instrument do show an interest in taking GCSE music? It may seem obvious that those who play an instrument are more likely to be interested in music post-KS3, having committed extra time to learning an instrument and all that it entails. This assumption should be questioned, however; children who are heavily involved in either instrumental lessons or extra-curricular may sometimes feel that they already have music in their lives, both in school and out of school, and do not feel the need to advance this with further study. As the Ofsted report (2009) states:

Paradoxically, pupils who have well-developed instrumental skills often feel they can continue music through extra-curricular activities and do not need to take music GCSE. More attention needs to be given to increasing the value of studying music as a compliment to continuing to perform music with others (Ofsted, 2009: 53).

In some respects, this links to the possible effects pertaining to students' perceptions of what GCSE music entails; Ofsted (2009) observed that even those students who are interested and involved in music may not feel inclined to take GCSE, either because of the lack of perceived relevance and interest in relation to their instrumental skills, or because they can still partake in music. This then leaves them free to opt for a different subject which may not have the same opportunities outside the classroom environment (Hargreaves and Marshall, 2003). In this study, this view was supported in the qualitative data of those who had taken GCSE music when asked why they thought that more students were not taking the subject.

The difficulty with attempting to discuss the links between instrumental tuition and GCSE uptake rates and locating the findings from this study within the wider body of literature is that there is very little

research which refers to this, at least in terms of empirical evidence. Due to this, the research that is available will be discussed alongside the results from this study to try and elicit a useful discussion on the relevance of the findings to practice.

Receiving instrumental tuition was statistically significant as a correlation with the desire to take GCSE music within the KS3 quantitative data; as an extra-curricular activity, this showed the highest positive correlation, suggesting that instrumental lessons do seem to be linked to the wish to take GCSE music. As discussed, this is perhaps to be expected, although should not be taken for granted, and these results provide some useful further empirical evidence to support this supposition. The other data sets in this study supported the idea that instrumental learning was a key factor in encouraging the continuation of musical development; BMus and PGCE students rated their instrumental teachers as being the greatest influence on their musical development, above and beyond family and other factors. So, what can be learnt from this in relation to the literature? Perusing the KS3 qualitative data relating to what students enjoyed most about KS3 music, practical musicianship featured highly; learning through doing was often cited as a very positive aspect of school music and supports the research of the Musical Futures initiative (2006) and Paynter (2002). If, therefore, practical musicianship is enjoyed by so many students within class music lessons, including learning the keyboards and other instruments, then it is perhaps reasonable to suppose that enabling all children to learn an instrument may further this appreciation of practical musicianship; this may then lead to greater motivation to continue formal musical study, based on an increase in enjoyment and self-efficacy related to musical learning.

Considering the implications and justifications of instrumental tuition for all, Philpott (2001) writes a thought-provoking chapter on the realities of providing this in terms balancing the impact of the financial cost which would be incurred against the long-term aims. He cites the work of Cain, (1989) who found that although it is possible to pass GCSE (A-C) without

extra tuition, all those who were awarded an A grade did have extra instrumental tuition of some kind. Bray (2000) also discussed this issue in relation to uptake rates, and came to similar conclusions to Cain.

In all, then, it seems that although KS3 music alone can prepare children adequately for GCSE music to a point, instrumental tuition is highly desirable, if not essential, in terms of encouraging students to continue formal study in music and allowing them the best chance of academic success; those participants who had already taken GCSE music in this study certainly seemed to support the idea that instrumental learning was a crucial factor in their musical development and motivation to continue. The focus group students, however, did not feel that KS3 music prepared them for the requirements of GCSE, bearing in mind the very small sample of this group, and placed a high importance on their instrumental tuition as the main source of their musical development and understanding. This group of students felt that due to this, instrumental learning should therefore be available to all students as a part of their music education entitlement, and that this should be commenced as early as possible to have the greatest impact. Related to this, Jørgensen (2001) studied the benefits of beginning instrumental learning early, and concluded that those who start earlier do acquire higher grades, and in this way supports the opinions of the focus group. Additionally, Flohr and Hodges (2002) cite research (Gordon, 1979, 1990; Schlaug *et al.*, 1995) which suggests that there are both critical and optimum periods for musical development, during which children are thought to respond more quickly and easily to musical training, and this is related to age; to commence instrumental tuition before the age of 10 would, it seems, be more helpful to the child than starting later if the choice is available.

So, in summary, what is instrumental tuition for? Should instrumental tuition be provided for all children from primary school age to enable the maximum number of children to be encouraged to take music GCSE and gain the best possible grade, or should there be more of an emphasis placed

on the more social and personal benefits of learning to play an instrument? (Hallam and Prince, 2000). There is a danger that there is so much focus on the academic and skill-based advantages of learning an instrument, that within this argument, the intrinsic benefits of instrumental learning may be lost. If instrumental learning is seen as essential to GCSE preparation, and therefore should be undertaken by all children so as to provide an inclusive approach to music education and give all the same chances of success, then this could in itself be enough of a justification to spur on with the battle to enable instrumental tuition for all as an educational right. However, if instrumental tuition is not essential to pass GCSE, as Cain (1989) argues, then different questions might be asked: do educationalists focus on the personal benefits that might come from learning an instrument and see GCSE music as part of the advantages and justification, but not the only one?

The results from this study are clear: if KS3 students are learning an instrument, they are more likely to want to take GCSE music. This may be linked to their perceptions of themselves as musicians, as in they see themselves as more able than they might otherwise have done, or linked to a genuine increase in enjoyment and appreciation of music and what it can offer to their lives as a result of the lessons, or a mixture of both. It might be suggested that providing instrumental tuition to all should be justified on both counts: as an opportunity to allow all children, whatever their natural ability, to have the *best chance* at achieving the top grades at GCSE if they are able, as well as allowing an exploration of the personal and social benefits that come with such an experience, whether GCSE music is taken or not. As Hallam (2006) writes:

Most children learning to play an instrument or having vocal tuition will not go on to become professional musicians or work in careers related to music. Extra-curricular musical activities prepare most young people with the basis for lifelong engagement with music in an amateur or listening capacity, and promote the development of generic skills that are useful in a range of occupations. The aims of instrumental/vocal teaching should therefore be to make music fun whilst still providing challenging and intellectual stimulation...there is a need for educators to redefine what they consider to be successful learning outcomes (Hallam, 2006: 115; 117).

There is still some way to go before the ideology of instrumental tuition for all may become a reality, though, even if it were fully justified; as mentioned, the financial implications are a serious factor in the potential of such an endeavour. There is a certain amount of lottery involved already in how much tuition is available, and the quality of such provision. Ofsted (2009) reports of this dilemma, and the impact that it is having on some children's musical development:

The best instrumental/vocal programmes were making a real difference to pupils' musical education, but not all programmes were of sufficient duration or quality. Substantial government funding has been allocated...but the schools, music services and agencies involved have not always thought sufficiently about how such provision links to the music curriculum as a whole, how to ensure longer-term impact or how to make sure that initiatives reach those most in need of help. (Ofsted, 2009: 7).

There needs to be thought put into why instrumental tuition is desirable, including the longer-term effects on GCSE uptake and standards of musicianship and how such tuition might be maintained and integrated into the whole curriculum, as stated by Ofsted. The worst scenario would seem to be the knowledge that instrumental tuition is advantageous to children's musical and generic education, including having a positive impact on motivation to continue with the subject post-KS3, but the organisation and distribution of the available funding not being carefully thought-out and managed.

Instrumental lessons, therefore, seem to offer much to students, both in terms of increased knowledge and understanding of the subject, and in terms of their general enjoyment of music. What of other extra-curricular music activities?

The literature on this and the link to GCSE uptake rates is sparse, and largely speculative. Bray (2000) states that such activities may put some students off taking music GCSE in that they foster music as an elitist activity; other research (Pitts, 2007; Denny, 2007) is more positive about the impact of extra-curricular music, not only on the individual student, but also on the whole school.

This study found that KS3 students who took part in extra-curricular musical activities were more likely to take GCSE music than those who did not; this result cannot easily be compared to other literature on the topic as there is little with which to compare it to. What can be said, though, is that for those children in KS3, in-school extra-curricular musical involvement was more influential than out of school activities, and suggests that in-school music might be quite important in developing and fostering a love of musical involvement which has the potential to encourage further study in music. At KS4 and A-Level, the students in this study were engaged in musical activities in and out of school, although they were apparently more discerning regarding their choice of in-school activity; the choir and the orchestra, where there was one available to join, were less popular choices overall than music groups out of school, and yet other school music groups fared well compared to music out of school. This suggests that there seems not to be an overwhelming preference for music in school or out of school in terms of venue at this stage; rather it is the type of music-making available that might determine the difference and the subsequent increased interest in taking GCSE music. Interestingly, the Ofsted (2009) reports states the following:

Extra-curricular provision varied widely. Frequently, the range of extra-curricular provision did not match the interests and abilities of the students. During the visits, inspectors often identified the need for schools to increase the range of, and students' access to, extra-curricular activity...their (the students') involvement diminished as they got older (Ofsted, 2009: 34).

It seems, then, that extra-curricular involvement is related to GCSE uptake, in that those who are involved at KS3 are perhaps more likely to want to take GCSE music, but that it is not as much of an influence as other factors such as instrumental learning, perceptions of ability in music and the view of music as being worthwhile in the jobs market. This could be due to the lack of range of activities available in some schools, as highlighted by Ofsted, or that children simply have many activities from which to choose and need to be carefully selective about which ones are worth their while; it

could even be that some students who have instrumental lessons would prefer to opt for another type of extra-curricular activity other than musical, such as sport or drama, for example, feeling that they have already satisfied their musical needs through their instrumental tuition: this may well be an area worthy of further research.

Enjoyment and value attached to class music lessons at KS3 and GCSE music uptake rates.

GCSE music uptake rates, although higher than the O-Level before it, have always prompted concern (Spencer, 1993; Ross, 1995; Harland, 2000; Bray 2000; Lamont *et al.*, 2003; Lamont and Maton, 2008; Ofsted 2009) and have often been linked to the level of enjoyment of class music. Indeed, class music lessons have received rather a bad press over the years, although there have been some attempts to challenge this (Mills, 2005b; Lamont *et al.*, 2003). Often, however, there is the thought that music in school is not enjoyed and valued as a subject, and conflicts widely with musical preferences outside of school and subsequently affects GCSE uptake rates (Harland *et al.*, 2000; Hargreaves and Marshall, 2003).

This research, therefore, aimed to explore in part the effect of enjoyment and value attached to the subject on the desire to take GCSE music, and to explore the thoughts of older music students who are further on in their musical journeys relating to this issue. The distinction between enjoyment and value may be an important one; enjoyment of a subject suggests an active appreciation of it – a liking of learning the subject at the moment it is experienced. To value a subject is to recognise its wider purpose in the curriculum and people's lives and may equate to a deeper level of appreciation for what the subject might offer longer-term: a student may not enjoy a subject over and above another, but could still value it for what it might bring to them and others educationally (Plummeridge, 2001; Paynter, 2002; Bowman, 2002). In terms of the KS3 music questionnaire, value was ascertained by asking the students to state their level of agreement with the

statement 'class music lessons are important'; on a wider level, the statement 'music is an important part of my life' attempted to draw out opinions on how much value students place on music as a generic influence in their lives.

The results across all schools within the KS3 data suggested that there was a link between those who enjoy and value music lessons and wanted to take GCSE music, and support much of the literature, (Harland *et al.*, 2000; Ross; 1995; Bray, 2000) suggesting that the lower numbers of GCSE music uptake are indeed due in part to levels of enjoyment. Before breaking this down further and discussing what it was that children did or did not enjoy about class music, it is important to look at the between schools findings, as these allow far greater scope for discussion.

The research of Lamont *et al.* (2003) challenged prior opinion on the nature of children's attitudes towards class music lessons. The rather glum catalogue of reports into school music were uncomplimentary on the whole, and much was made of the need to improve music provision: low uptake rates at GCSE have often been cited as 'evidence' of this, without much regard for the true causality of this perceived problem. As reported in the research of Lamont *et al.*:

In summary, the previously documented problems with school music are not supported by the current research...we find that attitudes towards music from both teachers and parents were positive...most pupils enjoyed some if not all aspects of the statutory curriculum up to Year 9 (Lamont *et al.*, 2003: 240).

Nevertheless, the authors did concur that 'there was undoubtedly a decline in interest in academic music at age 14, as illustrated by very low levels of interest in GCSE music', (ibid.: 240) and it is this paradox which inspired the current thesis: if class music enjoyment was not at the root of children's decision-making process, then what was, and what to extent *does* class music have an influence? It was necessary to ascertain from the results in this study whether or not the findings supported those of Lamont's research, and to compare these to the other factors which have arisen as influential. As already mentioned, across all schools the findings show that if

children do not enjoy and value class music lessons at KS3, then they are less likely to opt for it. Between schools, though, there was a marked difference in the results.

In three schools, the overall level of enjoyment across all students was high, and yet there was no statistical significance between this and wanting to take music GCSE, which supports the findings of Lamont *et al.* In two different schools, however, the children's enjoyment level of music was influential in their decision according to the statistics, as well as the majority of all students reporting an enjoyment of the subject; in these schools, therefore, music was perceived as enjoyable and this appeared to impact on children's decisions whether or not to take GCSE music. Why might this be? Such results suggests that music lessons are perceived positively overall, and that this is important to those who opt to take it, and supports the findings from the Musical Futures initiative that more enjoyable and inspiring lessons do result in higher take-up (Price, 2007b). It may suggest that in those schools in which children are engaged in school music, for whatever reason, this is beneficial to their attitudes about the subject, and demands further research into what constitutes 'good' music teaching and learning. A further three schools, however, showed a statistical significance between enjoyment of class music and the desire to opt for GCSE, but with lower overall enjoyment by the majority of students: are the students in these schools, therefore, enjoying certain aspects of the teaching which encourages them to want to study it further, but which is experienced negatively by the rest of the students? The focus group students in this study did report that they had the impression that music at KS3 was seen more as a perfunctory route to GCSE for those who were more able, rather than approached as an educationally enhancing experience for all. In relation to this, though, the older participants in the study who had already opted to take GCSE music were not particularly complimentary about their experiences of KS3 class music, and as an inspirational and influential factor, it was neither particularly positive or negative, suggesting that other factors such as being

good at the subject and seeing it as a useful to careers as more important. Nevertheless, the BMus and PGCE students did highly value music as a curriculum subject, although again they did not perceive their own class music lessons at KS3 to be much of an influence, and felt that it had a great deal to offer if it is taught well and is relevant and accessible to all students.

These results lead on to two important questions: firstly, in the case of those schools in which class music is seemingly influential, (in 5 out of 9 schools and across all the schools) why is this? And secondly, what is music education for? With regards to the latter question, it may be tempting to assume that those schools which recruit higher numbers to take GCSE music are more successful than others; however, looking at the issue in more depth, is 'success' measured by recruitment outcome, or by the satisfaction (or enjoyment) of all students? If measured in terms of recruitment, then schools in which enjoyment is high overall, but in which this does not have much of an impact on take-up, might be considered as lacking, which seems questionable. Would it be considered acceptable if school music is uninspiring for the majority and further study only of interest to a few, even if these few did enjoy the lessons? The latter scenario hardly conjures up images of the inclusive music education of which Lamont *et al.* (2003) write of when discussing such issues:

The current challenge for school music is to maximise the experience for *all* pupils during the statutory period, and to help all those who show an additional interest in music beyond the classroom to develop that, recognising the value of their own contributions...(ibid.: 240).

The justifications regarding music and its purpose and place in the curriculum will be discussed more fully later in the discussion, but for now it is necessary to look at what constitutes enjoyable teaching and learning according to the results of this study in relation to the literature: although enjoyment of class music does not seem to be the most influential factor of all discussed, it is one of the factors and should therefore be further explored.

Good teaching is arguably difficult to define. It is often stated, reasonably one might add, as the reason behind effective school music and children's enjoyment of the subject in school, and subsequent higher-than-average GCSE uptake rates, (Mills, 1998a; Ross, 1995) yet more detail is needed as to what constitutes good teaching. It is a subjective matter, as what to one student may seem good may not to another. This said, however, research can be undertaken which can attempt to gather together a general consensus of what good teaching and enjoyable learning may involve.

The current research found that KS3 students enjoyed the practical aspects of music lessons the most, although this in itself should not be regarded as automatically linked to good teaching; unstructured performance on the classroom instruments, unless educationally justified, may be enjoyable to students but not necessarily enhance their learning. However, if students do enjoy learning in music through doing music, as is supported by the literature, (Price, 2006a; Paynter, 2002; Ofsted, 2009) then it can certainly be a route through which good teaching can emerge victorious, perhaps in terms of GCSE uptake rate improvements, perhaps in terms of imparting a love of music to all students, whatever the considered aims of a music education are. Certainly the work of the Musical Futures team found that GCSE uptake rates were much improved in the schools in which more practical-based, facilitative learning was implemented (Price, 2006a). Doing music, being able to play the instruments, compose music and work in groups, defines the nature of the difference between music as a subject and other subjects in the curriculum, and is something which can grasp the imagination of students, and at the same time make it relevant to their everyday lives, the latter issue being raised as influential in the work of Ross and Kamba (1997). The positive influence of making the KS3 curriculum as relevant as possible was highlighted by the older students in the current study, and is again supported by the key findings of Ofsted (2009) related to the features of effective music teaching in those lessons judged as 'good' or

'outstanding'; specifically, the report stated that 'the work (in the good or outstanding lessons) was related to real life musical tasks' (ibid.: 26).

There is a need, however, not to assume that relevance of subject matter to students' familiarity and comfort zone should be the approach always taken; Handford and Watson (2003) urged against this approach simply to secure a fan-base for the subject. They argued that a wide variety of musical genres should be taught in music lessons, including the more unfamiliar, or there is a limited development of knowledge. It might be suggested, then, that it is not so much what is taught, as the way that it is taught, and this idea is certainly supported across the research literature (Hargreaves, 1986; Swanwick, 1999). An integration of musical styles into the music curriculum, approached in an integrated fashion which allows for the opportunity for students to explore those aspects of musical learning which they seem to enjoy the most could be most effective.

High standards, too, and attention to differentiation were also factors which arose within the current study as being part of good teaching. In terms of the KS3 respondents, high standards was more akin to classroom management issues than to standards of work achieved in the lesson, although one might surmise that the reason many of the children in KS3 cited poor behaviour as an aspect they least liked about the lessons is linked to the subsequent inability to get on with any sort of productive work. 'Boring' lessons were also put forward as a least attractive quality by a number of KS3 students, which could amount to poor teaching in terms of differentiation; careful attention to meeting the individual needs of the students should result in work levelled correctly against their academic standards, and go some way towards minimising boredom. The older students (GCSE, A-Level, BMus and PGCE students and those in the focus group) were more articulate when it came to this issue, and stated that catering for different abilities across the age range would assist in making the subject more interesting and accessible for all, as well as raising standards. After all, the number one factor for opting music GCSE for all

who had already was being good at the subject; for those who do not have access to instrumental tuition outside of school and are thus only in receipt of school music lessons, the expectation of higher standards could be very important and make a real difference in attitude towards the subject, and in attainment reached. Ofsted (2009) cited high standards, or at least high expectations from staff, as a typical feature of the good or outstanding lessons of those observed. It should not be assumed that those children who are not interested in taking instrumental lessons outside of curriculum time are not capable of becoming able musicians, for example, and all children should have the opportunity to learn and develop to the best of their ability. There is otherwise the concern that music lessons will, almost by default, promote music as an educational experience as elitist; by not stretching all students and expecting high standards, students may inadvertently be made to feel not intrinsically good enough to study music beyond the basic requirements of KS3, which would possibly affect both enjoyment of music lessons and the desire to take music further as a subject. To instil a value of music education and all that it can offer to students, whilst implementing a challenging yet rewarding curriculum for all stages of the music curriculum, is arguably the optimum aim and gives all children the best chance of success.

Having looked at the different factors which most seem to impact upon GCSE option choices, it is now necessary to summarise this with a view to discussing whether or not lower uptake rates should be fairly judged as a school-based problem; if so, what implications does this have for music in the school curriculum? Leading on from this, the considerations of what a school music curriculum is for are important: is music in the school curriculum for the preparation of the GCSE examination and beyond, or to develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of music, regardless of whether or not they go on to take GCSE? There is also the argument that it is for both purposes, and this too will be discussed.

Lower GCSE uptake rates: is it a problem?

The crux of the thesis is to study the reasons behind the relatively lower uptake for GCSE music than for other optional subjects. Although there are quite wide variations of music uptake rates between schools, (Bray, 2000; Price, 2006a) there is still widespread concern as to why a subject that is enjoyed by almost all adolescents on some level out of school (Hargreaves, 2003) is not recruiting more to take it beyond the statutory curriculum in school on a national level (Lamont and Maton, 2008; Ofsted, 2009). This phenomenon has been presented as a problem by much of the research which has addressed it (Ross, 1995; Harland *et al.*, 2000; Bray, 2000). So, according to the results of this study and the existing literature, are lower uptake rates really indicative of a problem?

Simply put, it is complicated to provide a clear answer to this question. However, complicated issues such as this which demand further exploration can be analysed further with careful attention and thorough research, which has been the aim of the current study. From this research, it could be argued that it is only a problem if the reasons behind GCSE music uptake rates are to do with: firstly, *inaccurate perceptions* of what GCSE music does or does not entail and offer, both musically and in terms of transferable skills (by students, staff and parents); linked possibly to, secondly, a *lack of perceived relevance* of the subject in its own right throughout the core music curriculum – hence many of the KS3 respondents reporting the subject as not being taken seriously by either themselves or their peers – related to ‘good teaching’ including both the enjoyment of the subject and a focus on high expectations from staff; and, thirdly, *insufficient means* up to the end of KS3 to education all children to prepare them for the examination, if an extra skill-base is needed to study music further by way of instrumental tuition, for example, which is not required for other optional subjects.

The phrases in italics denote an important emphasis of meaning; there cannot be an assumption, for example, that lower than average uptake rates

in music are problematic and there needs to be attention focused on what is meant when uptake rates are considered negatively. There *is* an element of choice about studying music post-KS3, and students are at liberty to make choices about the subjects which they would most like to study, and this choice may encompass many different factors, some of which may not have been covered by this study. The issue, it seems, is more to do with giving children the right information to enable *correctly informed choices* together with providing a background of an *educationally enhancing and fully inclusive* music education to that point. That is, if young people reaching the end of their statutory music education are armed with the facts about what GCSE music entails, and have been properly and thoroughly prepared to take it whatever their musical background, then if they choose not to take it, this in itself does not equate to a problem. It means rather that they have made an informed choice to take another subject, and as educators this should be respected as part of the developmental process that occurs at this phase in students' educational lives.

The concern, then, is more that those involved in the delivery and development of music education are doing a disservice to young people by not informing students fully of the nature and possibilities of music education, and how GCSE might follow as a natural step in musical development.

To be more explicit in trying to identify whether or not lower uptake rates are indeed a problem, it is necessary to recap briefly the main findings from this research in relation to issues such as perceptions as outlined above.

The major finding was that children in KS3 music who did not view music as a viable career option were less likely to opt to take GCSE music than those who did: this finding was the significantly highest factor across all schools. Is this attitude problematic? It is a difficult question to answer, as there is limited attention to this issue across the literature. It could be argued that potentially, yes, this is problematic, more in what the results suggests than what they reveal outright. Across the literature, children and their

parents reportedly view music as potentially less viable an option at GCSE than other subjects (Button, 2006; Ofsted, 2009) and this in itself does need further investigation. Why, for example, is music regarded less favourably in this light? The issue of transferable skills from musical study has been discussed, in that music has potentially much more to offer students for the future workforce than might be initially assumed by either parents or students. This seemingly influential factor needs to be broken down and studied in further depth, and would be the main suggestion for future research; the reasons behind why students perceive music as less viable in terms of a job could be many. One such factor might be students not regarding the subject seriously, and many KS3 students in this study did cite this as being a major problem with music lessons at KS3. This in turn could reflect upon students' perception of how seriously future employers might regard the subject. This link, however, is tenuous and speculative which is why further research is needed to provide further exploration.

In terms of other possibly incorrect perceptions relating to GCSE uptake rates, the ability to play an instrument well was not seen as an off-putting prerequisite to taking GCSE music by KS3 students, which contradicted the literature (Wright, 2002; Bray, 2000; Lamont *et al.*, 2003). Yet delving deeper into the KS3 qualitative data, it was seen that many students did view playing an instrument as a potential barrier, and a motivational issue is a possible causal explanation for this contradiction; the perceived effort involved in taking GCSE music is possibly too much. Returning to the idea of whether or not this is a problem is necessary. If students believe that they could do GCSE music if they tried hard enough (as in the KS3 results of this study) yet feel that there is too much work involved and effort outside the classroom (as raised as an issue by several BMus students), then this might be considered a problem to overcome. Moreover, there needs to be a consideration that perhaps such perceptions are correct; according to the literature, children can pass GCSE music without the extra instrumental tuition, but are more likely to fare better if they do have it (Cain, 1989;

Philpott, 2001). It is perhaps the case that children are made aware of this discrepancy by various sources and would rather choose another subject which does not involve such effort. This issue becomes problematic only if ignored; what needs to occur is careful reflection on the requirements of the GCSE syllabus, and the recognition of how any student who may wish to take it might be supported in fulfilling these. Students need to be fully and accurately informed as to the requirements, and if, as the literature suggests, better grades are as a result of instrumental tuition, then all children should have access to it. Whether this should be as part of curriculum time so as to lessen the extra-curricular burden on students, or as part of an effective and long-term initiative for all is an issue very much still debated (Ofsted, 2009). The results from the current study are clear, however: instrumental lessons, or learning to play an instrument, were undertaken by almost all those students who had opted to take GCSE. Additionally, their perception of being good at music was the main reason that they wanted to take it. Although again the link between this is speculative, instrumental lessons, therefore, may not only increase standard of musicianship in terms of grades attained at GCSE, but also in self-efficacy and perception of musicality. This is important: if all children receiving statutory music education have access to instrumental tuition, and across a long period of time, then it is probable that children will feel better equipped and more confident to embark upon GCSE music. This in itself is idealistic, and if funding was not an issue then such an aim would be far simpler to put in place to achieve. A further consideration is in relation to children's motivation to continue learning an instrument for a long period of time. Sloboda (2001) and Hargreaves and Marshall (2003) all report that children struggle with maintaining their interest in motivation in instrumental learning across time. This in itself is an area for research in its own right, but for the purposes of this study, it needs to be considered as part of the issues raised. If motivation to learn an instrument outside of curriculum time is challenging and the perceived effort to do so is off-putting to children who are not immediately interested

in outside participation in the subject, then what is the answer to effective and inclusive instrumental tuition? It could be surmised that the only sure way to get children involved in instrumental tuition and maintain such involvement is by undertaking it as part of curriculum time. Wright (2002) alerts to the difficulties of this in a practical sense, and primary school teachers should also be considered in relation to their own level of musical ability and confidence. Music education to many primary teachers is an unfamiliar territory and often causes anxiety, (Hennessy, 2001; Glover and Ward, 1998) and it may be unrealistic to expect all primary school teachers to become proficient instrumentalists enough to teach beginners.

In many primary school settings, though, a specialist music co-ordinator is able to collaborate with class teachers to provide a very effective music curriculum for pupils. Collaboration with music services in relation to instrumental and vocal provision can also be most beneficial to children's experiences of music in the primary school. Yet current provision varies widely, and standardisation across schools is needed to ensure that all schools are able to provide the best music education, drawing on a variety of sources, and for a certain length of time. Ofsted (2009) report on this issue:

At its best, schools' involvement in instrumental/vocal programmes provided excellent professional development for primary teachers. More generally, there was insufficient dialogue between specialist instrumental teachers and classroom teachers and their involvement in programmes was too short to have any lasting impact. The very best practice recognised that the programmes were a partnership between the specialist music teacher and the specialist class teacher (Ofsted, 2009: 21).

From this recent research, then, it can be supposed that an effective collaborative approach is advisable, and the 'very best practice' can be attained using the integrated knowledge of different professionals: the class teacher's knowledge of the children; the specialist music teacher's knowledge of the subject, and ability to support, and hopefully professionally develop, the class teacher where required. The support of the music service as a general source of curriculum support was also stated as positively influential by Ofsted. However, the restrictions on the length of

programme are necessary to consider, and is an area in need of development. To inspire children to learn an instrument is one thing; to maintain the learning throughout primary school and through transition to secondary school is a challenge (Sloboda, 2001) and one that needs addressing, and will take time and resources.

The effect of primary school music education on secondary, and the possible impact on GCSE uptake as part of this, should be reflected upon, and the 'educational ladder' to which parts of this thesis has referred is a necessary part of the discussion. Certainly the students in the focus group in the current study, albeit only six of them, were adamant that primary school music should pave the way for developing interest and continued enthusiasm for music generally and for instrumental tuition.

The lack of perceived relevance of the subject, if measuring this in terms of value and enjoyment, was influential in some schools in this study on the desire to take GCSE music, and could be argued as problematic. The Musical Futures project found that in two of the schools in which the approach was implemented, an increase in the wish to do music GCSE was evident and pushed the percentage of those interested to well above the national average (Price, 2007b). Although this project involved only three schools, the results are indicative that different approaches in teaching and learning can increase the wish to take music further.

In summary, to what extent, if at all, are uptake rates problematic? Due to the many different factors at play, and the wide variations of rates between schools, it is difficult to come up with a definitive answer. However, I would like to suggest that overall they are indicative of a problem, based on the results from this study and across the literature. The main problems seem to be:

- Lack of perceived relevance of the subject to the jobs market by students and parents: do teachers need to market the subject

better and highlight the transferable skills of the subject, as well as the subject-specific skills?

- In relation to subject-specific skills, there is confusion on behalf of KS3 students as to the requirements for instrumental learning at GCSE in relation to the attainment level needed and the effort involved in reaching this: do children therefore require more explicit information on the need for instrumental skills, the standard required, how much effort will be involved, and how they might be catered for as instrumentalists?

Policy-making issues such as when (commencement) and how (curriculum-based or extra-curricular) to implement such instrumental tuition needs to be considered as part of this issue.

- In some schools, children do not enjoy their music lessons at KS3, and this seems to have an impact on their wish to do GCSE music. It must be remembered, though, that other factors are influential in the decision-making process, and music lessons on their own should not be blamed for putting children off as the main reason, but as a contributory factor. This is particularly borne out by the fact that in some schools children enjoy their KS3 music lessons but still do not opt to take music GCSE, and the overall picture must be considered.

The problems outlined are not detrimental to every school's GCSE music uptake rates, and this in itself does make the attempt to explore such issues and decipher quantifiable facts quite a difficult task. However, it can be surmised that in some schools the above issues are problematic, and issues such as instrumental learning and enjoyment of lessons at KS3 are arguably important both in relation to GCSE uptake rates and on a wider level in terms of children's general music education. This leads the discussion on to its final focus: what is a school music education for? GCSE

music is for some the next step after KS3, and much of this thesis has been an exploration into why children do or do not take it, and whether or not this is a problem. Yet it should not be assumed that healthy GCSE music uptake rates are the only goal of music education; this would be to narrow the discussion and ignore some important questions. Most notably, some of the literature has suggested that if GCSE rates are problematic and reflect on the quality of music in schools, then music education in schools is not required, and those who are interested should be catered for outside of the school setting (Paynter, 2002).

However, enjoyment of lessons and the accessibility of all children to an educationally sound music education as an end in its own right must be reflected upon as a justification for its existence, whether or not GCSE uptake rates are considered good.

The purposes of music in school.

The idea that music in the school curriculum might be under threat as a result of comparatively low GCSE uptake rates, (Bray, 2000) and possibly result in music provision being catered for outside of school, is one that suggests that academic achievement and status is the main goal and criteria for success of a school music curriculum: this potential threat is reason enough to demand an exploration into and consideration of what school music education is really for. Pitts (2000) wrote an extensive review into the reasons to teach music, and, interestingly, subject knowledge and, presumably, qualifications as a part of this were not deemed as the most important justification within her discussion:

Broadly speaking music education has been advocated only rarely for the acquisition of subject knowledge, but rather for its desirable cultural influence, its preparation for the profitable use of leisure time, and its development of sensitivity and imagination (Pitts, 2000: 34).

Such a statement is thought-provoking, and highlights the uniqueness which music holds as a subject; it can certainly provide excellence in music, of which Mills (1998b) speaks of as the main tenet of music in schools, as

well as encouraging students to become aware of, and hopefully develop an appreciation of, musical heritage and culture (Handford and Watson, 2003; Koopman, 2005). The idea that music can also develop the sensitivity and imagination of which Pitts writes is much in line with the literature on the development of aesthetic appreciation which can arise from the study of music and form part of an overall music education (Swanwick, 1999; Hargreaves, 1996; Finney, 2002). There is, additionally, an argument that from studying music, children might gain valuable transfer effects (Rauscher, 1998; Overy, 1998; Schellenberg, 2004); even with the caution which is applied to the studies in this area in terms of methodological rigour and reliability, there is a general increase in the interest of transfer effects within education (Price, 2007a) and music has for a long time been cited as one subject which can contribute positively to a child's cognitive, social and emotional well-being and development (MacPherson, 1922; Hargreaves, 1986; Spychiger *et al.*, 1995). The importance statement from the most recent National Curriculum for Music (QCA, 2007) highlights the emphasis that should be put upon extra-musical effects within the compulsory curriculum:

Music is a unique form of communication that can change the way pupils feel, think and act...Music brings together intellect and feeling and enables personal expression, reflection and emotional development...Music develops pupils' critical thinking skills...It also increases self-discipline, creativity, aesthetic sensitivity and fulfilment (QCA, 2007: 3).

This is a powerful statement. Although not all of the importance statement has been quoted, it is interesting to note how very little of it contains direct reference to the learning of specific musical skills. The programmes of study across the Key Stages give more detail and direction in this area, but the overall justification for music in the curriculum is focused on the non-musical benefits for children, both in their lives at school and at home.

Returning to the idea of music being catered for outside of the school setting for those who show an interest in music, what benefits would this have? It is difficult to see how this could have a long-term positive impact on

students. It is one thing to bring music education into and out of the community, to forge links with community musicians – this, too, is actively encouraged in the 2007 National Curriculum – and quite another to remove music education provision in schools altogether.

In relation to GCSE uptake rates and removing music from the curriculum on the basis of these, the results of this study have shown that in some schools, the lack of desire to take GCSE music is linked in part to the students' (negative) experiences of class music in school, but this is not the case across all schools. There are some schools in which students enjoy class music and still do not want to take GCSE (as in the study of Lamont *et al.*, 2003), and others in which enjoyment of class music does seem to positively correlate with the wish to take GCSE. Initially, the results from this study suggest a wide variety of experiences across schools, but an underlying issue to come from this is the need to be aware that school music is not always a predictor of GCSE music uptake rates, and for reasons that are difficult to fathom definitively, (Pitts, 2000) it is necessary to view music education provision as something of which music GCSE is a part, but is by no means the whole, or *raison d'être*.

Nevertheless, it is certainly helpful to explore why music GCSE uptake rates are lower in some schools, and perhaps to make headway into improving teaching practice where standards are not as high; uptake rates may improve as a result of this, as in the Musical Futures schools, but they may not. This does not mean automatically that school music is at fault. Perhaps as educators, we need to be satisfied that we have been transparent with pupils about the requirements of the GCSE music exam, having taught pupils the necessary skill-base which they will require, whilst policy-makers needs to look long-term at the academic aims of music as a subject and ensure that, whatever the requirements, *all* children are able to approach the exam as the next logical step in provision, if they wish to take it. To remove music in the school curriculum *because* of uptake rates would be detrimental to what music education, and indeed education as a whole, is about: it

would deny those who most need access to learning and facilitative help the opportunity to decide for themselves what they want to experience as learners, and for what reason.

The results from this study pertaining to the link between GCSE music and job prospects should prompt further reflection regarding this issue and its implications. For example, it suggests that children are aware of their future role in the jobs market much more and earlier than might be assumed, and whether or not music as a subject will be useful to them later in life. Part of the purposes of the music curriculum could be exploring this attitude with students, in line with the general curriculum aims, one of which is to enable 'all young people to become responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society' (QCA, 2007: 179). Again, as with increasing enjoyment of music lessons at KS3, such a focus on music and the jobs market may result in more children opting to take GCSE music, but it may not. Research into music education can inform and add to knowledge in different ways, but there are not necessarily any guarantees as to the outcome of implementing new initiatives on the basis of this; it can be hoped that a greater understanding of particular issues might be reached, and positive change come from this in practice, but it is a process of continuous evolution, as is the nature of the social world, and very often it is about the amalgamation of different ideas and understanding that can produce forward-thinking and change. Swanwick writes on the nature and aims of such research for the Music Education Review Group:

Of course we need to know more. We also need to know '*different*'...we need to visit the tents of other people on the hillside of music education and indeed on other hills and critically engage with them, while at the same time developing our own personal projects. For, in my view, it is the conceptual thread that runs between specific investigations that ultimately matters: the development of distinctive ways of looking at the world (Swanwick, 2001b: 8).

So, in summary, what is music education for, and how do GCSE uptake rates fit into this? Reflecting on the results of this study, the KS3 students who enjoyed their KS3 music lessons were praiseworthy regarding aspects of learning music that set it apart from other subjects. In particular,

practical music-making, and working with others as part of this, was a frequently-cited positive aspect of learning music. If music education were not available in schools, it is possible that the students would rarely get to experience such opportunities, and even less likely to experience them with the help of a skilled facilitator. To be justified in school as a part of the curriculum, it has been argued that music must be of educational value, (Paynter, 2002) and actively improve students' musicianship above and beyond what they would experience outside of school (Regelski, 2005). Related to this, part of the challenge for music educators is to cater for all abilities, and this was cited as a main issue for KS3 music development from those in the current study who had taken GCSE music, who either felt that they had not been challenged enough, or that the majority had been marginalised in their favour. Music educators who maintain high expectations of students are more likely to achieving a good working classroom environment, (Ofsted, 2009) and achieve the best from everyone, and we can again return to the aims of the Music Manifesto (2005) which asks that music education should be 'challenging, vigorous and inspiring' for all (p.54). This should include those who are less able, but also those who are at the upper end of musical ability, those who have an interest in the subject beyond the school curriculum, and who may at some point wish to pursue a career in music. It is important that a form of positive discrimination does not occur in school music, whereby those who are more able are not sufficiently challenged in order to cater only for the majority; differentiation at all levels, although challenging, is necessary to provide an inclusive education, and not promote the idea that music is either exclusivist at one end of the spectrum, or purposeless for everyone at the other. Specialist music schools for the very musically able can provide the necessary extra level of support for budding musicians who want to follow this route, but there should be an alternative, all-inclusive option for others, which allows them to develop at their own rate, whatever this is.

GCSE uptake rates, though they may be indicative of a problem as discussed, should be seen as part of the overall musical educational of the child, and not as a separate entity; the latter view of GCSE music is possibly part of the problem regarding the way it can be seen not as the next natural step, but as something different and exclusive, (Wright, 2002) and should be discouraged.

Music education is, I would argue, about enabling all children to have fair and equal access to a subject which can provide so many benefits, subject-specific and otherwise. To question its place in the curriculum would be to deny the opportunity to engage educationally and on many levels with an art form that is such an important and central part of our humanity. GCSE music is a link in the chain, and uptake rates should not be seen as a make-or-break indicator of school music success or justification.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

At this point in the thesis, it is necessary to reflect upon the aims and objectives of the research, its limitations as well as the implications and recommendations arising based on the findings. Suggestions for further research will also be outlined.

An overview of the study

Music is a part of life for everyone on some level. It is something which can evoke different emotions and form part of a person's identity. This is particularly so of adolescents growing up; music forms part of a 'badge of identity' (Hargreaves and Marshall, 2003) for this age and is an important part of these developmental years.

Given this appreciation of music by adolescents outside school, it might be expected that the same enthusiasm would be given to music inside school. It is perhaps surprising, then, that music GCSE recruits fewer students on average than other optional subjects such as art and drama; one might assume that the music department in a school might have a 'head start' in recruitment, as music is such a favoured pastime for so many youngsters. This is not the case, however, and as a secondary school music teacher I was interested in exploring the reasons why. On reviewing the literature, much negativity surrounded school music, and low GCSE music uptake rates were often linked to the 'problem' of school music. Only a few research articles argued against this theory, surmising that there was perhaps more to lower uptake rates than poor teaching in school, and that further investigation was needed. Furthermore, there seemed to be a need for an up-to-date empirical study to contribute to the field.

On the basis of this, it was decided that an empirical investigation into the reasons why children may or may not choose to take GCSE music would be undertaken and would provide useful further knowledge and understanding about this research problem. Additionally, it was not assumed as a starting point that low GCSE uptake rates were either

indicative of a problem in a general sense, or that school music was ineffectual, as commonly portrayed across much of the literature related to this issue.

The research aimed to gather the opinions and thoughts of a large number of KS3 students, by asking whether or not they intended to take music at GCSE, and then compare this response to other possibly influential factors through both closed and open-ended questions, analysed quantitatively and qualitatively respectively. The thoughts and opinions of those who had already taken GCSE music were also seen to be important and potentially insightful, and so smaller samples of students studying music in further and higher educational settings were also questioned, through questionnaires form and a focus group.

Limitations of the study

There were several limitations with the research that should be made explicit. Some were associated with the area of study; a topic such as this encompasses so vast a field that it was necessary to limit this so that the thesis retained a clear focus, and these will be outlined first.

Direct comparisons with other optional subjects are not made other than the basic statistics pertaining to uptake rates. Although it would be interesting to explore in more depth the reasons why students might prefer other subjects, it was felt that the focus of the thesis needed to be on the reasons and extent to which certain factors affect the uptake rates of music in particular; preference for art and drama, for example, could of course be one of these, but to have begun a detailed investigation into all optional subjects would have been unrealistic within the scope and aims of the research.

It was decided that the BTec, a vocational route to gaining a formal qualification in music, would not be studied as a possible influential factor in GCSE music uptake rates. It is quite possible that this may have an impact in some schools, and indeed some institutions have abandoned GCSE in favour

of BTec, and the reasons for and implications of this could be an area of further study in its own right. Given, however, that GCSE music uptake rates have been of long-term concern since its implementation to the present day, it was thought that the study would not be detrimentally affected by omitting this factor.

Parental influences on option choices, both personally and financially, were not explored explicitly, other than under the umbrella term of 'my family' in some closed-ended statements in the questionnaires. It was felt that answering questions about this may prove difficult for the younger students; both in terms of being uncomfortable disclosing parents' views, despite the anonymity of the questionnaire, and in terms of being aware of the financial ability of parents to pay for instrumental lessons.

The potential influence on music technology on uptake rates was not explored specifically. Participants were free to mention this aspect of music lessons within their qualitative responses if they wished, but as a genre of music education it was not referred to in its own right. Although the use of music technology in schools has seen a large increase since the advent of GCSE music, the national statistics of uptake rates has not changed in line with this. There has been a slight shift in gender patterns, (more boys than girls took GCSE music in the most recent statistics) thought to be related to the influence of music technology, but overall the take-up rates have remained similar and general trends, rather than those explicit to gender, were being explored within this study.

The influence of option blocks on choices was not examined. This was considered to be a potentially influential factor, but to have accurately ascertained the extent of this would have proved difficult, time-consuming and relatively unimportant when compared to the other issues which needed investigation in line with the other literature on the topic.

Methodological limitations included the layout and explanation of the ranking statements on the KS4/A-Level and BMus/PGCE questionnaires. Although this style of question had been based on past research and had

worked successfully, many students in the samples within the current study were confused by the requirements and completed the question incorrectly. There was, however, enough scope on the basis of the answers to carry out some analysis, and general trends could be observed. Perhaps an example response included on the questionnaire, or indeed a different style of question altogether, may have reduced or eliminated this misunderstanding.

The focus group was carried out after the design and distribution of the questionnaires. Although not strictly speaking a methodological flaw, for the best results of the thesis it may have been advantageous to have conducted the focus group before sending out the questionnaires. The main justification for this would be to gather opinion and then add further questions to the questionnaires if necessary; although the focus group sample was small, ideas may be presented which had not been considered previously. This was in evidence following the group's discussion on the importance of primary school music in relation to instrumental lessons. If the focus group had been conducted prior to the questionnaire distribution, an additional question regarding the date of commencement of instrumental tuition could have been added to add further insight to this area.

Implications and recommendations from the current research

Based on the results from the current study, it seems that there is some link between school music and the desire to take GCSE music, but that this does vary between schools, as might be expected. It must also be remembered that children's experiences of school music do not occur within a vacuum, but are influenced by many variables, including those outside of school. Bearing this in mind, the implications and recommendations are outlined below:

- The positive and statistically significant correlation between wanting to do GCSE music and the desire to do music for a job was present across all schools and the highest strength of correlation across and

between all but two schools at KS3 according to the quantitative data; this finding was supported in the KS3 qualitative data. It was also the second most popular reason for having opted for GCSE music for the older participants. This suggests that young people reflect upon the relationship between option choices and careers early in their secondary schooling, and according to the results of this study, such a consideration is an influential factor above others such as enjoyment of lessons and participation in instrumental tuition and extra-curricular activities. The implications from this are important: it suggests that music is possibly only seen as a viable option for GCSE if it is to be used towards a future career in music. Music as an option for GCSE, therefore, needs to be discussed with KS3 students both in terms of its subject-specific content and benefits, as well as its potential contribution to the jobs market in terms of transferable skills; if music GCSE is only regarded as useful for music careers, rather than for the acquisition of more general skills, then it is likely to recruit fewer to take it than might otherwise. The idea that teachers may need to market the subject with more careful consideration to this factor may well be prevalent and worthy of attention. Future recommendations would be to research this issue in more depth, looking more specifically at the reasons why children view music as useful or otherwise for their future careers and in what capacity; parents, teachers and pupils' attitudes towards this would all be helpful in further exploring this. It is also suggested that children's perceptions of what other optional subjects might offer them in terms of a career are explored in comparison with that of music: is it, for example, the case that children perceive more future opportunities inherent in taking art, drama and sports GCSE than in music?

- Enjoyment and value of school music is, in some schools, an influential factor in encouraging more students to take GCSE music.

This encompasses mainly the enjoyment of practical music-making, including group work and composition, and in particular the opportunity to explore the instruments and resources available in class. When school music was not reported favourably by participants across all sample groups, it was often cited as due to other students' negative attitudes towards the subject and a lack of differentiation to cater for all ability levels. Such an impact will have implications for numbers going on from GCSE to study A-Level and so on, and will impact potentially upon numbers taking degree courses in music, and onwards to teacher training; the wider implications must be considered.

Although enjoyment of class music was not an influential factor on uptake rates across all schools, the general findings on attitudes towards class music, whether influential to GCSE numbers or not, can be of use to educators, both to classroom teachers and teacher trainers: supported by the literature, the current study found that 'learning through doing' in music is positively-received by students. In some institutions, this may have a positive impact on uptake rates, in some it may not. If not, there is still an argument that enjoyment of lessons with educational value is an intrinsic aim of what might be considered a good music education, and must be considered, and not simply in the light of uptake rates.

- Those who have instrumental tuition at KS3 (and possibly before) are more likely to want to take GCSE music: the profile of those who had continued formal music education post-KS3 and beyond supports this. Such tuition may provide students with increased motivation, and those who play are more likely to feel equipped to cope with the perceived demands of the exam; certainly there is an argument that if all children were able to play an instrument, either learnt outside of school time or in lessons, there would be less of a gap between the

perceived effort involved in taking music and taking other subjects. Although a direct comparison between music and the other subjects was not made by students, it seems reasonable to suppose that in music at least, instrumental learning by some sets it apart as potentially exclusivist in terms of time.

Related to this, there was some confusion on the part of KS3 students as to the exact level of standard or participation in instrumental tuition needed to take GCSE between the quantitative and qualitative data. This suggests that some clarity is required when teachers are discussing the requirements of the exam in terms of standard and effort.

The recommendations are that: firstly, attention must be paid to the aims and requirements of the GCSE music exam: is the learning of an instrument obligatory in order to obtain the top grade? It is unacceptable, I would argue, to state that children can still obtain a pass without instrumental tuition, but are less likely to secure a top grade, as if this was okay. *All* children should be able to secure the top grade at GCSE if they are capable, and should not be at a disadvantage based on lack of necessary tuition. If the GCSE exam across all subjects is promoted as the next step after the KS3 curriculum, then there should be no grounds on which all children are not given the means to succeed in music, and at the highest level. On this basis, the GCSE exam needs further analysis to ensure that it is fit for the purpose for which it is intended.

Secondly, if instrumental learning is essential to secure a top grade at GCSE, then attention is required relating to the provision of instrumental tuition across the core music curriculum. Questions such as when is the best time to commence such tuition, what method might be used, and for how long the programme should run, need to be considered. There are financial implications involved in this, and attention should be paid towards the extra-musical benefits of

learning an instrument, as well as considerations as to how best to prepare students for GCSE music should they wish to take it later in their school career.

- Extra-curricular music was a contributory factor in inspiring some children to do music GCSE, although it was difficult to ascertain to what extent. In the KS3 participants, extra-curricular music in school was more influential than that out of school. This suggests that providing accessible musical activities in addition to an effective core curriculum may well be helpful in recruiting students, although this was less influential than instrumental tuition across all samples. In terms of recommendations, further research might be undertaken to look more explicitly at this issue, related to the particular types of activities that children enjoy, and the part this plays in their musical motivation and development. The older students in the study who had taken GCSE were more selective about the type of activity rather than the venue itself; perhaps, then, further insight into the types of extra-curricular activity offered by schools and the inclusivity of these may help to inform further about musical motivation, including the impact on uptake rates.

In summary, then, the research has contributed to further understanding on the issue of lower uptake rates, whilst at the same time opening pathways to further areas of research. These are:

- Further exploration into the link between GCSE uptake rates and careers, encompassing the views of parents, teachers and students towards music and other optional subjects;
- As part of this, an investigation into the extent to which teachers currently market GCSE music, and how;

- Further investigation into the aims and scope of the GCSE music exam in relation to instrumental tuition: is it required to secure the top grades?
- How and when to implement the necessary level of instrumental tuition if it is regarded as essential in order to secure the top grades at GCSE, and whether this should be seen as a necessary preparation for the GCSE exam, or equally as part of a well-rounded music education;
- Further exploration into the poor attitudes towards music lessons noted by many in the current study, manifested in difficult behaviour and classroom management issues for teachers;
- The impact of the BTec examination on GCSE uptake could also be an useful area for further research.

At the end of this thesis, there is much on which to reflect. The data collected has enabled an exploration into the low uptake rates of GCSE music, highlighting some of the main reasons why this is so within an empirical investigation, and has raised some issues worthy of further study.

In addition to this, there has also been a focus on the purposes of music in the school curriculum, and the part that GCSE music plays in this. It is hoped that from the undertaking of this research, there has been a sound and worthwhile contribution to the field of knowledge.

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Appendix A

Questionnaires

Question numbers in bold type denote those used for analysis purposes

Appendix A1: Questionnaire (KS3)

About you

Age: _____

Year Group: _____

School: _____

Boy/Girl: _____

Questions

Q1 1. Are you learning to play an instrument? *(Please circle your answer)*
Yes/No

Q2 If 'yes', which one(s)? _____

Q3 Do you have instrumental lessons? Yes/No

Q4 2. Are you good at singing? Yes/No

Please read the following sentences and tick one box to answer 'yes', 'no' or 'not sure'.

	Yes	No	Not sure
Q5A I enjoy class music lessons at school			
Q5B I like listening to music at home			
Q5C I enjoy classical music			
Q5D I enjoy pop music			
Q5E I am in a band			
Q5F Music is an important part of my life			
Q5G My family likes music			
Q5H Class music lessons are important			
Q5I I find class music lessons difficult			
Q5J We listen to the sort of music I like in class music lessons			
Q5K My friends enjoy class music lessons			
Q5L I enjoy making up music			
Q5M I enjoy performing music			
Q5N I am going to take GCSE music			
Q5O I would like to do music for a job			
Q5P I enjoyed music at primary school			

*Please read the following sentences about what you **think** GCSE music would be like and tick one box, 'agree' or 'disagree'.*

	Agree	Disagree
Q6A You need to play a musical instrument really well to do GCSE music.		
Q6B You do lots of composing (making up music) in GCSE music lessons.		
Q6C You listen to good music in GCSE music lessons.		
Q6D GCSE music would be boring.		
Q6E GCSE music would be fun.		
Q6F GCSE music would be very difficult.		
Q6G GCSE music lessons would be similar to the school music lessons I have now.		
Q6H You have to be in all the school choirs/bands/orchestras if you want to do GCSE music.		
Q6I There is no point in doing GCSE music.		
Q6J I would love to do GCSE music but I don't think I am good enough.		
Q6K Anyone can do GCSE music if they try hard enough.		

Q7 3. Please tell me your favourite subjects at school:

Q8 4. Please tell me your *least* favourite subjects at school:

Q9 5. Are you in the school choir? Yes/No/There isn't one

Q10 6. Are you in the school orchestra? Yes/No/There isn't one

Q11 7. Are you in any other school music groups? Yes/No/There aren't any

Q11A If 'yes', which one(s)?

Q12 8. Are you in any music groups outside school? Yes/No

Q12A If 'yes', which ones?

Q13 9. Are you musical? Yes/No

Q14 Why do you think this?

Q15 10. What is your favourite type of music?_____

Q16 11. What do you enjoy about class music lessons?

Q17 12. Is there anything you do not enjoy about class music lessons? Yes/No

Q17A If 'yes', what don't you enjoy?

Q18 13. Do you have any other comments about class music lessons?

Q19 14. If you are planning to take GCSE music, please say why:

Q20 15. If you are not planning to take GCSE music, please say why not:

Thank you very much for answering the questions.

Appendix A2: Questionnaire (KS4 and A-Level)

Age: _____

Year Group: _____

School: _____

Male/Female (*Please delete*)

Q1 What is your main instrument (including singing)? _____

Q2 Do you play any other instruments? (*Please circle your answer*) Yes/No

If 'yes', which one/s? _____

How much do you agree with the following statements? Please circle one number.

	Agree Strongly		Agree Slightly	No opinion	Disagree Slightly		Disagree Strongly
Q3A I enjoy class music lessons at school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q3B I like listening to music at home	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q3C I enjoy classical music	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q3D I enjoy pop music	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q3E Music is an important part of my life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q3F My family likes music	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q3G It is important to teach music in years 7-9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q3H I enjoy composing music	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q3I I enjoy performing music	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q3J I would like to do music for a job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q3K I enjoyed class music lessons in years 7-9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q3L My friends enjoyed class music in years 7-9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q3M Extra-curricular music is the most enjoyable part of school music	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q4 Are you in the school choir? Yes/No/There isn't one

Q5 Are you in the school orchestra? Yes/No/There isn't one

Q6 Are you in any other school music groups? Yes/No/There aren't any

Q7 Are you in any music groups outside school? Yes/No

Q8 If 'yes', which ones? _____

Q9 *Why did you opt to take GCSE music? Please rank the following reasons from 1 to 8, with '1' denoting the greatest reason and '8' the smallest reason.*

	Rank		Rank
I liked the teacher		I was told that I should	
I couldn't think of anything else to do		I wanted to follow a career in music	
The extra-curricular activities were really good		My friend was doing it	
I was good at music		KS3 music lessons were fun	

Q10 Were there any other reasons, and how would you rank these?

What do/did you most enjoy about GCSE music lessons? Please circle one number.

	Like a lot		Like a bit		Dislike a bit		Dislike a lot
11A Listening	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11B Greater freedom to work in your own way	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11C Group work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11D Learning about other music in other cultures (world music)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11E Improvising	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11F Composing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11G Performing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11H Learning about new styles of music	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11I Learning about the history of music	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Was there anything else you have enjoyed/ not enjoyed?

Is there anything you would change about GCSE music? Please put a tick in the box to answer 'yes' or 'no'.

What would you like to change?	Yes	No
More composing		
More history		
More theory		
More performing		
More music technology		
More modern/pop music		
Less history		

Is there anything else you would like to change about GCSE music?

Please think back to class music lessons in years 7-9.

What did you enjoy about these lessons?

Was there anything you did not enjoy about class music lessons in years 7-9?
Yes/No

If 'yes', what didn't you enjoy?

For GCSE music students:

Are you going to take AS Level music? Yes/No/Don't know

If 'yes', why?

If 'no', why not?

For AS/A2 Level music students:

Are you going to study music at college/university? Yes/No/Don't know

If 'yes', why?

If 'no', why not?

For all students:

Do you have any further comments about class music lessons at KS3?

Thank you very much for answering the questions.

Appendix A3: Questionnaire (BMus and PGCE)

Q1 1. Age: 18-24 25-29 30-39 40-49 50+

Q2 Current Course of Study and
Year: _____

Q3 Institution: _____

Q4 Male/Female (*Please delete*)

Q5 What is your main instrument (including singing)? _____

Q6 Have you attended a secondary school in the UK? Yes/No

If No, please progress to Question 6.

Q7 If Yes, please tick each of the following types of school that you attended:

State school		Independent school	
Comprehensive		Specialist school (ie Wells, Purcell, Chetham's)	
Grammar		Choir school (other than Well's/Chetham's)	
Secondary modern		Other fee paying/independent school	
Sixth form college			
Other type of college for students aged 16 and over			
City Technology College (CTC)			

Q8 2. Please think back to your experience of secondary school class music lessons aged 11-14 (KS3).

Q8A What was the best aspect of class music lessons at KS3?	
Q8B What was the worst aspect of class music lessons at KS3?	

Q9 3. *How much do you agree with the following statements? Please circle one number.*

	Agree Strongly		Agree Slightly	No opinion	Disagree Slightly		Disagree Strongly
Q9A I really enjoyed class music lessons at KS3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q9B My family had a more positive influence on my musical development than my class music teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q9C My instrumental teacher had a more positive influence on my musical development than my class music teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q9D Composition was the best part of class music lessons at KS3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q9E Music at KS3 was taught really well in my secondary school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q9F It didn't matter if music at KS3 was taught really well as long as the teacher was nice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q9G Extra-curricular music was the most enjoyable part of school music	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q9H Music was a valued and important part of the whole-school community in my secondary school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q9I My class music lessons at KS3 introduced a wide range of musical genres and styles, including world music and rap	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q9J My class music lessons at KS3 focused mainly on classical music	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q9K My friends enjoyed class music lessons at KS3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q9L I enjoyed music at primary school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q9M It is really important that music is taught in schools as part of the National Curriculum	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q9N Classical music should be the main genre taught in KS3 class music lessons	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. *If music GCSE¹ was compulsory for you, please tick this box:* ☐

For those who did not take GCSE music, please tick this box: ☐

Q10 Why did you not take GCSE music?

¹ General Certificate of Secondary Education

Please progress to Question 6.

Q11 5. For those who opted to take GCSE music: why did you make this choice?

Please rank the following reasons from 1 to 8, with '1' denoting the greatest reason and '8' the smallest reason.

	Rank		Rank
I liked the teacher		I was told that I should	
I couldn't think of anything else to do		I wanted to follow a career in music	
The extra-curricular activities were really good		My friend was doing it	
I was good at music		KS3 music lessons were fun	

Q12 Were there any other factors which influenced your option choice? Which rank would you give these factors?

Q13 6. What motivated you to continue beyond GCSE music to where you are now?

Q14 7. The national uptake of GCSE music is currently less than in other subjects. Why do you think this is?

Q15 8. What do you think can be done to improve numbers opting to take GCSE music?

Q16 9. Do you have any further comments about class music lessons at KS3?

Thank you very much for answering the questions.

Appendix B

Participant Information Sheets

Appendix B1: Participant Information Sheet

(For teachers of schoolchildren participants)

Dear Colleague

I am currently studying for a Doctorate in Education (EdD) at Durham University. For my thesis, I am conducting a study into why students do or do not opt to take GCSE music. I have chosen to use questionnaires and small group interviews to find out the data.

I would be very grateful if you would help me conduct this research by distributing the enclosed questionnaires to the relevant groups; a cross section of different year groups would be the most helpful. For KS3, I have sent enough questionnaires for a Year 7, 8 and 9 class comprising about 30 students per class plus a few extra copies (100 in total). For KS4 and A-level, I have (hopefully!) sent enough questionnaires for each of your students to complete. There is a different questionnaire for students in Key Stage 3 and for those taking GCSE and A-level music.

The questionnaires I have sent you are designed to find out what motivates children to study music in and out of school and what impact this has on their desire to take GCSE music.

Amongst other things, I have asked the students what they enjoy about class music lessons and if there is anything they do not enjoy. The questions have been asked to find out as much as possible with regards to what influences their decisions to take GCSE music.

I have decided to question children currently in Key Stage 3 and those taking GCSE and A-level music. I would like current GCSE and A-level music students to reflect upon why they decided to take music beyond Year 9. It is hoped that this may give further suggestions as to what influences option choices in Year 9.

The questionnaires are anonymous and the name of the school will not be referred to in the final report, of which you will receive a summary (expected completion date September 2009).

The questionnaires should take no longer than 5 minutes to complete, and I would be grateful if the students do not confer whilst completing the questionnaires.

If you are happy to help, **please return the questionnaires, along with the signed consent form, to me at the following address (stamped addressed envelope enclosed) by Easter 2007 if at all possible:**

School of Education
Leazes Road
Durham
DH1 1TA

Thank you very much indeed for taking the time to help me with this research project. If you have any questions relating to the study, please do not hesitate to contact me on 07891 968754.

Yours Faithfully

Mrs Fiona Little

Research Approved by Durham University's Ethics committee

Appendix B2: Participation Information Sheet

(BMus and PGCE students)

I am currently studying for a Doctorate in Education (EdD) at Durham University. For my thesis, I am conducting a study into why students do or do not opt to take GCSE music. I have chosen to use questionnaires and a focus group to find out the data.

I would be very grateful if you would help me conduct this research by completing the enclosed questionnaire. If you are happy to help, please complete the enclosed consent form and return it to me at the address below.

The questionnaire I am asking you to complete is requiring you to look back retrospectively at your experiences of music at Key Stage 3. It is hoped that by collating this data it may become apparent why students do or do not opt to take GCSE music.

Questionnaires have also been distributed to children currently in Key Stage 3 and those taking GCSE and A-level music.

The questionnaires are anonymous and the name of your institution will not be referred to in the final report.

A summary of the final report will be available on request on completion of the project (expected completion date September 2009).

Please return the questionnaire to me at the following address:

School of Education
Leazes Road
Durham
DH1 1TA

Thank you very much indeed for taking the time to help me with this research project. If you have any questions relating to the study, please do not hesitate to contact me on 07891 968754.

Yours Faithfully

Mrs Fiona Little

Approved by Durham University's Ethics Committee

Appendix B3: Participation Information Sheet

(Y10 Music Focus Group)

Dear Colleague

I am currently studying for a Doctorate in Education (EdD) at Durham University. For my thesis, I am conducting a study into why students do or do not opt to take GCSE music. I have chosen to use questionnaires and a focus group to find out the data.

I would be very grateful if you would help me conduct this research by organising a Music Focus Group which will take the form of a small group discussion with me and several Year 10 GCSE music students. I would very much like to tape record the discussion so that I can listen to what was said again afterwards and accurately report on what was discussed. The tape recordings will be destroyed on completion of the project (expected completion date September 2009).

If you are happy to help, please complete the enclosed consent form and return it to me at the above address.

The focus group is intended as a forum to discuss aspects of class music at Key Stage 3, and look into what inspired and motivated the students to opt for GCSE music. It is hoped that by collating this data, and analysing it in conjunction with the questionnaires I will be distributing, it may become apparent why students do or do not opt to take GCSE music.

The group would ideally comprise of about 6 students, and if possible contain an equal mix of male and female participants. The discussion will probably take no longer than 10-15 minutes.

The members within the group will remain anonymous and the name of your institution will not be referred to in the final report, of which you will receive a summary on completion.

If I receive your consent form, I will be in contact to arrange a time for the focus group to meet.

Thank you very much indeed for taking the time to help me with this research project. If you have any questions relating to the study, please do not hesitate to contact me on 07891 968754.

Yours Faithfully

Mrs Fiona Little

Research Approved by Durham University's Ethics committee

Appendix C

Questions for the Focus Group Interview

Appendix C: Questions for the Focus Group Interview

Questions devised before the interview took place:

- Why did you take GCSE music?
- Did your expectations of GCSE music in Year 9 match your experiences of the course so far?
- To what extent did the extracurricular activities in years 7-9 encourage you to take GCSE music?
- Why do you think that numbers currently taking GCSE music are lower than in other subjects?
- What do you think can be done to improve numbers taking GCSE music?
- Do you think that schools should offer music at KS4, an alternative or that it should be provided outside schools for those interested?

Due to the semi-structured nature of this interview, the questions above provided a framework from which to begin, but further questions arose from these. The questions below are those asked during the interview, and are written in the order in which they were asked:

- Why did you choose to take GCSE music?
- Did anyone really enjoy their lessons at KS3?
- What about composing music? Do you all enjoy composing music?
- Are your perceptions of what you thought GCSE music was going to be like the same as you thought in year 9?
- Is it similar to what you thought it would be like?
- Anyone else find it completely different to what they thought or very similar?
- How much do you think that extracurricular activities inspire people to carry on with music? Did playing in bands or orchestras or groups

of music at school push you further to take GCSE, or did it not really have a lot to do with your decision?

- Do you think that extracurricular activities need to be expanded to include popular groups to get more people in – do you think that might make a difference?
- Why do you think the numbers taking GCSE music are lower than Art and Drama?
- Do you feel that KS3 music on its own is enough to be able to take GCSE music?
- Do you think that music should be streamed?
- Is there an obvious answer as to what schools should do to get more students to take GCSE music?
- How was the transition from primary school to secondary school? Did you feel that you needed to start from scratch, or that the skills that you had learnt in primary school carried on to secondary school?
- So did you feel, generally speaking, that you needed to start from scratch?
- Do you think that schools should offer GCSE music in school or in an out of school centre for those who are interested?
- Would you say the teacher has more of an impact than your parents or friends?
- What makes a good teacher? Is it knowing their subject or the way that they are?
- What do you think about the BTec in music?
- Do you think anyone can do GCSE music?
- Any final comments?

Appendix D

Transcript of the Focus Group Interview

April - my mistake!

Wednesday 18th May 2007
Durham Johnson Comprehensive School
Focus Group Interview

Why did you choose to take GCSE Music?

Because I found it really fun and I already play instruments so I thought it would be... kind of inspired me.

I don't really play an instrument I just sing, but I do other things outside the school. That I think doing music would really help them.

I think it's just that I have always enjoyed music and I play an instrument myself, so that's good

I play a couple of instruments and my parents and my family are very musical

I play an instrument as well so I know music from before ????? So I thought it music would be easier for me to do 'cos I play an instrument and know music

I play an instrument and my parents are like saying to me that later in life people like to see that you've got music as a qualification

How much has the music lessons at KS3 influenced your decision? Did you enjoy those lessons Y7 – Y9 or not and if you did or didn't then what are the reasons for that?

I think I did enjoy KS3 but the people who weren't musical or didn't enjoy it kind of may have disrupted the lessons a lot. And also because I knew music I found it easy because when you're good at something it makes you like it more.

I hated KS3. I just really didn't like it and it wasn't how I wanted it to be. Like I enjoy music and stuff but the people in the class were disrupting it the whole time especially in my class and the teacher had to keep pausing and pausing just 'cos of these stupid people. It was just really annoying and I didn't like it, but then I choose GCSE music because I knew those people wouldn't be in my class

Did anyone really enjoy their music lessons in KS3?

There were aspect that I enjoyed but there were some bits like you said there were lots of people who didn't care ?????? There were some bit I quite enjoyed when we had to say compose something in a Japanese style those people were taken off to have more chance to do more sort of independent things and you do things more advanced.

Year 9 was better than years 7 & 8 because there was more composing and there was more people who knew music better and understood it.

What about those children then, who perhaps aren't as interested in music as you say perhaps don't have the background or natural interest. How can we make sure that they are more interested in lessons so that there isn't that disruption? What do you think we can do more of in music lessons? Thinking back to what you enjoyed about the lessons what do you think teachers could do to make them accessible to all students?

I'd say, like make it more about modern music. I mean I know you have to learn about old times and all of that sort of music but if they make it more modern because that's what interested me at that age. I would have preferred those lessons if it had been about music now.

What about composing music? Do you all enjoy composing Music?

Yes (all)

It's something different because people who don't know that much about music couldn't really get into that because it's a very large range of skills in music at KS3 so it's quite hard.

I agree with more modern because it's like definitely now at GCSE we're doing like Brit pop and I really enjoy that and I definitely think that like, people who don't really naturally like music would enjoy it too. It's not like 'let's all go and compose a song', it's really hard and musical ????? modern now, but you're still learning, it's just so much better, I think a lot of people would enjoy that and I would have enjoyed it more as well in KS3

I think that if it were in KS3 yeah, but like when you get to GCSE you have to sort of learn the old things so I wouldn't just completely wipe out all the learning

So how do we integrate? How do we make the 'old things' as you say by which I think you mean classical music types/genres, How do we put that into KS3 and make it interesting to everybody?

Well I know... that going back to the point about giving them an equal chance to people who are already musical, I remember at primary school we all went into this big hall and we did some musical things and they picked a few of us and offered us if we would like to get instrument lessons. But I think that that is a bit unfair that they didn't offer everybody that chance. I know that it could have been a bit difficult but it seems that everybody should get a chance if they want to, to learn an instrument where as it depends on their background if they do or not.

Do you think now that you have chosen GCSE music and you're nearly through the first year of it, your perceptions of what you thought GCSE music was going to be like in Y9 are they still the same?

Mine has changed because at the start the one thing that was kind of in the back of my mind was that I wasn't good at composition, I really thought that

you'd be kind of left and you would have to write this music completely by yourself but it's totally different. They give you like a little story line to kind of follow sometimes or like about what you are doing, and you can always ask for help. The teacher is not going to tell you what to do but you can ask for little hints or tips and before you do the composition you go through the features of what a composition should be and what it should be like so it's so much easier. I think that's what turns some people away is the composition side of it.

I would say maybe the performance side, because people don't think they are good enough to perform. When I first thought, I was stuck between music and geography which one to do because I wasn't sure if I'd be able to perform as well, but actually it doesn't matter which grade of piece it's how well you perform. So that's probably better, it's easier I think than I thought it would be.

Is it similar to what you thought it would be like?

Yeah.. it's pretty similar to how I thought it would be. I have a brother who's done GCSE music and the only difference really is the Brit Pop side of it.

Anyone else find it completely different to what they thought or very similar?

My older brother did GCSE music so he told me what it was like and what it consisted of and all things like that...

Did you think that was quite a big reason for you deciding 'yes, I think I can do this'?

Yes, 'cos he enjoyed it, he really enjoyed it and he went on to do A'Level music

I think I'm similar as well, 'cos my older brother did it. He didn't like it, he hated it completely, but then my other brother really liked it and I didn't know what to do

I think it's so much about family, like if you're family are musical and if you've brothers and sisters doing it, then it's like kind of, sort of automatic well not automatically gonna do it but it's like kind of there and you know you're probably gonna get to do it. But like my family no ones musical at all ????? Because it helps you so much I think ???

I knew a lot of people in the year above me who did music and most of them quite liked it so I quite knew what to expect

How much do you think that extra curricular activities inspire people to carry on with music? Did playing in bands or orchestras or groups of music at school, did that push you further to take GCSE or did it not really have a lot to do with your decision.

Yeah... It did quite a big. Because if you did have no musical background at all you really didn't have a reason to take music. You sort of think I don't know any thing to do with music, I won't be able to write or be able to read.. yeah so definitely.

I think it did a lot as well. Also if you're doing school things you automatically, even in Y9, feel if you've already picked it if you're going to choir and orchestra and all these things, so it just seems like the normal thing to pick it, because also the teachers know you go to these things so they might expect you to take it

Do you think the extra curricular activities need to be expanded to include popular groups even to again get more people in, do you think that might make a difference?

I don't think you can like force people to join an extra group, like there are some people I know who would never be like seen dead at choir or like orchestra and like nothings gonna make them do it. So I don't think you can push people into what they want you to do.

But try a different sort of extra curricular group maybe, you know like a pop band or a group or a soul band or something. Do you think that might make somebody who wouldn't be seen dead in choir or orchestra maybe would be seen in a different sort of group? Or not? Or do you think some people just don't want to be involved?

I think people don't like giving up their lunch time, they like to just run round in the yard rather than going into a hall somewhere and the same with after school activities. Just the thought of it makes them sound like they think they don't sound good if you're doing lunchtime clubs.

And it's the word 'extra curricular'

Why do you think the numbers taking GCSE are lower than let's say Art and Drama?

I think it's that art and drama, well like anyone can do art, anyone can paint to a certain level, anyone can act to a certain level, but with music you have to have some ????? knowledge and that's what puts them off. The theory and thinking that you have to be able to know, because you don't have to know anything the other two, just the basics, but that may be putting them off

For music you need to usually done quite a lot outside of school. I mean most people learn an instrument outside of school or during their lunchtimes. So people who don't feel that they can't do music

So do you feel then, going on from that. Do you feel that KS3 on its own is enough to be able to take GCSE music?

No (all)

They are not teaching the basic notations

I didn't learn... I wasn't... I was a bit like I didn't know whether to take music or not because I didn't follow... I wasn't very good at KS3 like I didn't follow like what was going on, I was a bit like 'what does that mean?' about everything and stuff. It's more like the outside of school things that I did, like I still think I'm a bit far like behind the rest of the class, because I don't know very much theory or anything, but it was sort of the outside of school things that made me do it

Also I think that the teachers, well maybe not the teachers but the way the lessons were based and the curriculum wasn't really based on people who didn't know music almost as if they were just waiting for those 3 years to go so they could just teach the ones who knew music like they weren't trying to get them involved they were just doing it 'cos they have to..

They don't really teach, for KS3 they don't teach music in the same way, so if you were starting to learn the piano or something you wouldn't learn the same sort of things, you wouldn't learn how to.....

Nothing in KS3 have I like taken with me to GCSE. It was just sort of like, apart from the piano playing a little bit, all I can remember is them giving me a sheet of paper of Titanic or something and everyone just sitting around the keyboard like playing Titanic. I really... I like didn't engage with KS3 at all I was just like 'Oh, music, let's talk', sort of thing.

I think it's very difficult because it's not set at KS3 it is mixed ability. They can't teach people who are good at music and are trying, while still make people who aren't going to choose it, and know they are not going to choose it, but still make it fun for them. So you've got people... it's always either aimed too high for people or aimed too low. It's very difficult to get it in the right balance for everyone.

Do you think that music should be steamed?

I think that yes in KS3 some people got piano lessons so when you're learning to play the keyboard and like Sarah said like doing Titanic with a few notes and some people found that really easy and picked it up in five minutes and other people had to wait months before they could play it so it was like hard

Is there an obvious answer to what the schools should do to get more students to take GCSE music?

I think you should just like explain it a lot more. Like when people come and see the subject just explain to them that it's not all like... you have to sit there and write a composition, there is a lot more sort of... there is listening in it as well and it's just like lots of different aspects of it. Because I was like 'what about the composition', I was really scared and nervous but it's not at all, it's completely different, like just explain it as much as you can and like reassure

the person like reassure their doubts and whatever their doubts is reassure them

Some people just decide from the straight off that they are not going to do music and you can't get them to do it. It's like PE, you know from like Y8 whether you really like PE and you're good at sport to go in and do PE for GCSE it's similar to that.

I think that they should give everyone the opportunity of learning an instrument and that would have a big effect on people, like if they know, or maybe even just teaching music in primary schools, 'cos I know we didn't get many lessons. I don't think we got lessons maybe we got a few lessons, but they didn't mean anything. I think they should give music lessons or options.

I think primary schools are a bit thick, because if you're learning an instrument then you're learning the theory of it and when you come into like secondary school you already have that little bit of theory in your mind and you're interested in like choir or something. I think it's like such a big thing in primary school and they should just like integrate it more instead of like one lesson 'Oh, pick an instrument and like play it' and it was like a tambourine or something.

A lot of you will come from different primary schools or did you all go to the same primary school?

So four of you went to the same primary school and two went to another primary.

How was the transition from primary school to secondary school? Did you feel there was a big sense of you starting completely from scratch in Year 7 or did you feel that the skills that you had learnt in primary school carried onto secondary school?

We didn't learn anything in primary school about music really. I think we did a few lessons but it was things like hitting a drum it really wasn't music you didn't learn anything. I did feel it was like sewing and cooking that you are starting straight away in Y7 like starting a new subject.

We just had the sound book which in Y7 we had the sound book too. I don't think we really did much about music as a thing it's just a thing we did every so often, just like we did Art every so often.

I think the most basic thing was like hitting a drum so like different note lengths.

So did you feel, generally speaking, that you needed to start from scratch in Y7 almost?

Yes (all)

Even though you're starting from scratch from primary school, I had already started learning music, learning an instrument and things so I wasn't really starting from scratch but like with primary school I was, even though I already knew some music.

I think that maybe how we did like the piano stuff and the keyboards in Y7 then maybe we should start that in Y6 or Y5 and get some little keyboards like mini ones so maybe like teach them the notes then 'cos like I started playing piano that's how I knew the notes but I wouldn't have if I didn't do that. Like I was sort of like 'what's C?' like as soon as I got into Y7. So I think they should definitely teach that because that's quite a big thing in Y7.

In Y9 when they started teaching people the guitar in their music lessons which I think will help persuade more people to do music because then they know they can play an instrument to a certain standard.

Do you think that schools should offer GCSE music in school or do you think that for people who are interested they should go to a different centre perhaps like an out of school centre? Do you think we still need to have the option to take GCSE music in schools, because some researchers are quite concerned at the moment that with the falling numbers that GCSE music is almost dying a death and some people are suggesting that we do take it out of the schools and provide for it elsewhere. But you all seem very keen that that shouldn't happen....

In this school though numbers have gone up....

We only had one class and now we have two classes....

There's one class of drama and two classes of music, so it's interesting what you were saying about more people taking drama than music...

Nationally.....

Yes, also I had a few friends that choose music and there were too many people and they got told they couldn't do it. So actually there was quite a lot picking music

Which is fantastic isn't it, for the school...

I think this school has always been pretty strong in music in comparison to some of the other subjects, I don't know....

Mr. Woods always told us about how each year more and more people took music, GCSE music

It has a lot to do with the teachers I think about why people do it because like if you have..... it so makes a difference about what you are going to pick. If you have sort of a teacher that's just like 'I don't really care, I'm not going to

teach you I'm just gonna chat to you all the time'. Then have a teacher that's like.... Who actually cares about it....

Yer (all)

One that like pushes you onto music and says 'go on you can do music'

And makes it fun as well. You can't like sit for whole lessons learn about music you sort of have to get into it & try things out.

So the teacher makes quite a big difference then...

Yes (all)

So would you say the teacher plays more of an impact than say your parents or friends?

I think my whole family would play more of it.. Like inspiration on me than my teacher but if the music teachers here were bad, they're not, but if they were I don't think I would pick music and that is with other subjects as well. You know you're not going to learn much if you've got a bad teacher.

My cousin did GCSE music a couple of years ago. He did it outside school 'cos the music teachers at his school didn't know what they were doing and weren't good enough to teach GCSE music

With me probably the family influenced me more but I know for example my Mum didn't do O'Level music because she had a really bad music teacher and I know it is a consideration with people if there were really bad teachers, which there aren't, but if there were you may not feel like you want to do. Particularly in a small department where you're likely to get that teacher. If you were in a really big department like Maths then you may not get that teacher again.

Like with chemistry it was like I hated it last year but this year I've got the most amazing teacher ever and now I'm like.... 'Cos I need to do it for what I want to do, so I was thinking there is no way I'm taking chemistry at like A'Level, then this year I'm like Oh yeah I really want to do it, so it changes your perspective so much

What makes a good teacher? Is it knowing their subject or is it the way that they are?

The way that they are....

Yes...

I think it's having passion in a subject

Yer....

Which sort of ties in with knowing lots about the subject

And just taking to you like you're a normal person.

Yep... that's one of my pet hates, is like being talked to like I'm a little kid when I'm not and patronising teachers... I hate it... want them to be able to relax with you and be how they are with you.

And that comes with confidence, I think with some teachers.

And they have to look at us in a different light as well 'cos like some people think like we all just sit there and talk and we're all going to be horrible people but we are just like people, just like children and we just want to be taught we're not like going to do anything

Some teachers are more like machines than teachers because there are quite a lot of the maths teachers that are so precise. You sort of don't connect with them at all. It's like 'I'm here to teach, now leave'.

They don't even know your name...

You can sort of tell they are not.... Just machines here to teach

And the ones that go 'today we're going to do this page of the text book, tomorrow we'll do this page of the text book'...

I hate text books.... Any teacher that uses a text book is just rubbish... seriously... it's really bad

They get ???? as well if they act as if they think you have some talent for music 'cos then it makes you think, if they think I'm good at it, then maybe I want to take it. Because they actually show an interest in what you are doing and it helps.

So enthusiasm is always more than you learning a lot about the subject almost...

I think the subjects maybe seen as like music by some people are seen as boring, in inverted commas, subject. It's important to have an enthusiastic teacher.

I think the whole subject of like music it's just like the word music it's like some people see it as a little swots sat there playing violins, like an orchestra, and all like posh and snobby. It's so not like that at all

What do you think about the BTEC in music? I don't know if any of you have heard much about this, but there is a new qualification, which is not quite as academic as say GCSE music. Do you think that these new qualifications that are more vocational, almost like GNVQ's are a good

thing, would you be interested in those? Or do you think that the GCSE is good as it is & should be try to change the qualification itself to try and get more people in?

I think both should be offered because the GCSE course as it stands it's tough, you can't just sort of wipe out learning about classical music because you know it's always going to be there and exist so it's also good to learn that. The more vocational one should be there for people who ??? just want to be able to do that sort of thing.

There are bits of music that I don't like but I don't think, even if I don't like it I don't think it should be take away because it's still important to have all the aspects I think.

I think we should really concentrate on getting the numbers for GCSE up, because I think it's a lot different to how some people think it is and I think really if they just tried it and we just like showed them what it was really like then I think some people might have done it who would have picked something else.

Do you think anyone can do GCSE Music?

My teacher once told me if a person in the school who doesn't play any instrument and has no knowledge, just through composing on the computer through sebelius and things, could get an A, so they can if you work at it.

I think it's either like, music you really like it and enjoy it and it's like I know you hear to be able to do it you need to enjoy it and have that kind of like flare sort of like you know what you're talking about. You can't just.... Like if a person came in that completely wasn't interested in music they wouldn't be able to like get interested in it 'cos they don't like it....

That leads back to the primary thing....

That can happen in any subject 'cos if you hate art and hate drawing

I think also it depends how good you've done in the year, If you've listened to things. I think that's probably the most important thing, because there are people, I mean like my brother who really.... He really wasn't very good at it and there was no way he could do it. I think there are always people who just aren't talented at music and even if there were less people doing the subject accept that there are less people doing the subject at GCSE but the people who are doing GCSE are going to be good at it. I would say it is better to have fewer people who are better at it than more people who are less good at it.

Do you then think that the BTEC would be a good thing so that you could have people who were really interested... what do the others think about that?

I think just because you're not like the best in the class and you can't like sit down and write a whole composition doesn't mean that you're not good at it like just 'cos you're like really bad at composition doesn't mean that you're not good at something else. I don't think that you have to be like an all rounder to be able to do it.

Any final comments?

I think that primary school is the big thing and that's what makes you change

Yes...(all)

In Y7 there is too much of a catch up for teachers to do.

They gave us a test to see what we already knew because people just didn't know anything, and people were like 'yer, I play piano'

So it is primary schools which really need to grab you when you're younger to really push that interest...

When you're young you're willing to try everything and you're gonna do everything once when you're young

And they're gonna enjoy it as well

And being part of an orchestra is not an embarrassment when you're young in primary school

